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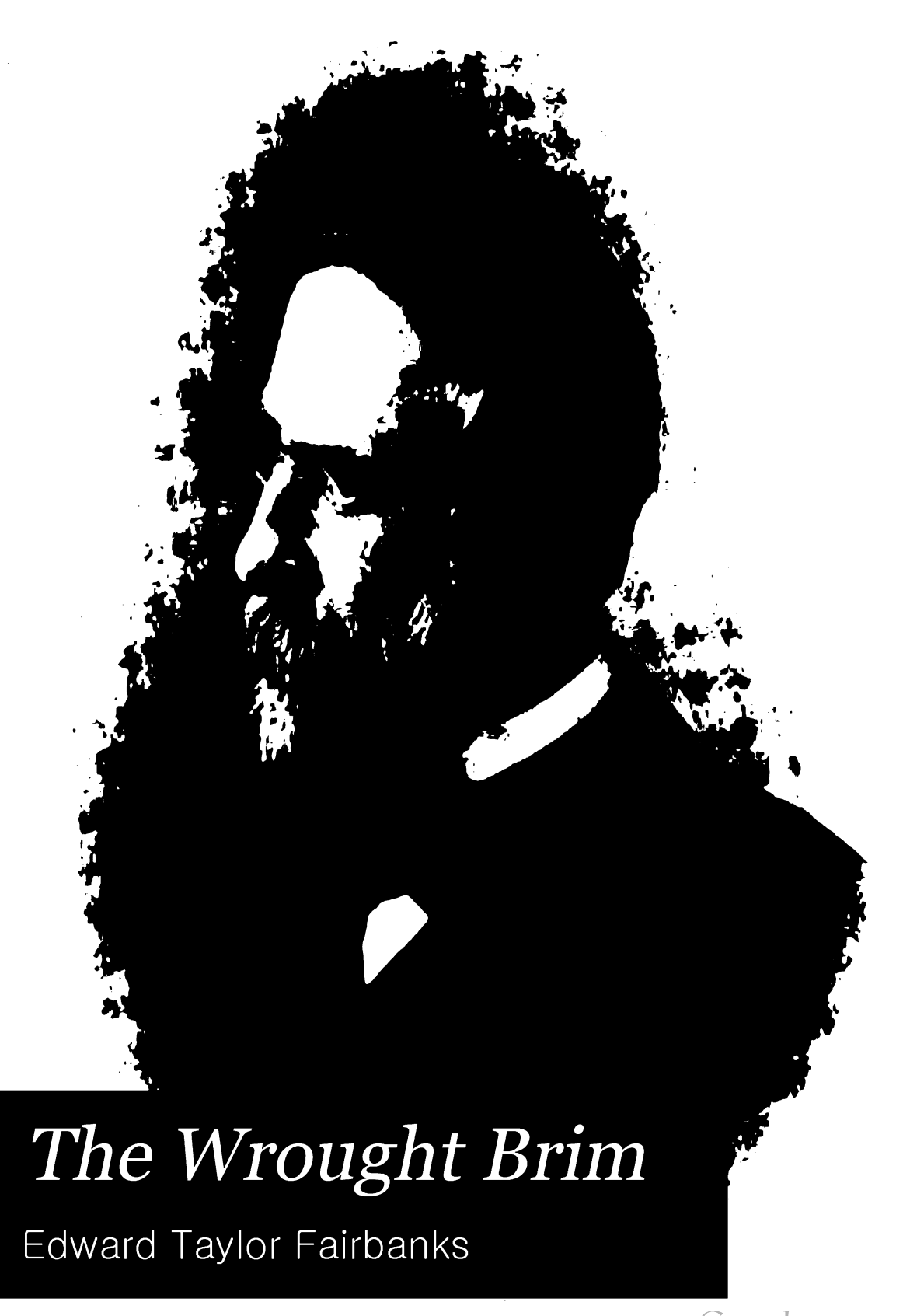

The Wrought Brim

Edward Taylor Fairbanks

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To Mr. Miss Perry.

Greetings to, and high regard for, the man who can remember and aptly quote the text of a sermon delivered fourteen years since!

It is time that he possess a book of sermons by the man who so impressed upon his memory the scripture text.

May the "Draught Brim" and other discourses bring the cheer warmth and uplift so characteristic of this unique author.

Frank T. Brooks

St. Johnsbury
Vermont.

September Nineteen hundred ten.

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The Wrought Brim

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TWELVE [illegible]

GIVEN IN THE SO[illegible]

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EDWARD TAYLOR FAIRBANKS

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1874 [illegible]

Published by W. W. [illegible]

ST. JOHNSBURY, VERMONT

1902

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The Wrought Brim

* * * *

TWELVE DISCOURSES

GIVEN IN THE SOUTH CHURCH

ST. JOHNSBURY, VERMONT

by

EDWARD TAYLOR FAIRBANKS

Twenty-eight Years Pastor

1874 1902

Published by W. W. HUSBAND

ST. JOHNSBURY, VERMONT

Press of The Caledonian Company

1902

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This Book is Number 5 of a first edition of 255 volumes.

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The publisher records his obligation to Dr. Fairbanks for consenting to the printing of these sermons which otherwise would have remained only in the memory of those who heard them.

St. Johnsbury, Vt.,
November 10, 1902.

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The Wrought Brim

The brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup with flowers of lilies.

I. Kings, vii:26.

1884.

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The Wrought Brim

EVERY day the handy little cup offers something to our lips. So in common thought as in Bible symbolism it stands for whatever life brings to us. It is our lot in life. And we are to see it now as a cup that runneth over with good; the brim of the cup wrought with God's good will as it were flowers of lilies.

Front of the temple stood the great brazen fount cast for Solomon by Tyrian foundrymen. It resembled a huge bowl or drinking cup, the brim whereof made the writer think of ornamented cups he had seen at some Jerusalem banquet, or maybe in the sanctuary.

The decorated cup has not yet gone out of fashion. Its porcelain sides or brim ornamented with lily work adorn some shelf in all our homes—often valued more for sentiment than for common use; and that's the meaning of it in our thought today. By a usage universal as thirst the cup is made to carry something more than drink. It is graced with sentiment, adorned often with touches of affection, it has something for the heart as well as for the lips.

Taking up his lily-shaped goblet the favored Israelite would seem to be drinking from a lily; as in another

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place he was said to be feeding among lilies. What did that mean. It meant that whether drinking or eating he should see how God mingles beauty with use, refinement with common things. Lunching on any hill slope of Galilee he is to consider the lilies out of whose ornamented cups the land flows with honey as well as with milk. God was providing for him superabundantly.

How do we find it in our own case. Is it merely a drink and a bare loaf that is dealt out to us? On the contrary the hand that prepareth a table before us in the presence of our need, fills, replenishes, enriches, adorns it, and by all the process of daily supply shows that man doth not live by bread alone or water only. The Father is at infinite pains to stimulate in his children more fine and subtile appetites akin to his own, therefore he gets the table garnished and the brim of the cup of life wrought with ingenious device.

We were wayward and disobedient, but he does not on that account shut us down like culprits to a stiff ugly tin cup. When he gives us water he sprinkles it from chalices of clouds that stand along the rim of the sky sometimes like burnished gold; or he pours it out for us from the inverted cup of the rainbow; or from overflowing basins up the mountain side whose brims are fringed with fern, or drip with moss and trailing vines. He furnishes our tables by way of intricate lily-work so that most of the kindly fruits of the earth make their trip roundaboutly to us thro' the fairy land of bud and blossom, as Dr. Macmillan has pointed out.

Take the commonest things on the table. Your dish of green peas saluted you first in the white flowers that twinkled thro' the pea brush. Your plums and

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apples came along out of billows of blossoms perfuming the morning. Even the homely pot of baked beans was introduced by lily-work encircling ungainly bean poles; and here is the pumpkin pie that made its way thro' the shapely calyx of a pumpkin or squash vine flower, the brim whereof was wrought like the brim of a cup of gold. A singer says:

> "God might have made the earth bring forth
> Enough for great and small—
> For food and medicine and life,
> Without a flower at all."

It was by a like short, business-like process as we are told, that the tempter insinuated the turning of stones into bread; an intensely practical way, both for quick results and for using up worthless stones. Instead of which God devised a most elaborate way of getting seed under ground, lifting it into green blades, sifting on it sunlight and shower, shaking out bearded wheat heads or tassels and silks and streamers of corn waving in the summer air—using up a whole season to get grain ready for us; and verily it seems to me as if he were all the while trying to get our attention on to this curious process.

Notice also what profuse distribution of finishing touches of various sorts in the way of aromas, flavors, perfumes, coloring and tinting. Did it ever occur to you what a genial thought God was having for you and for me when he compounded the flavors of pineapples, peaches, quinces, guavas; when he painted the cheek of the plum, when he distilled the juice of the strawberry vine into that crimson berry. Somebody said the other day that God always puts up his fruits

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in beautiful wrappers. Indeed I think we appreciate that fact every time we polish the apple before bringing it on. We want to bring out the gloss that got dimmed in the barrel; we like to show off the coat of many colors that God originally put on, a snugger fit than Solomon had in all his glory.

Now someone will say that all this is vapory sentiment. If a thing cannot be turned into cash or use, what's the good of it? I had the misfortune to meet that same man once. Amidst the drudgery of the farm kitchen his wife planned for a touch of brightness by cherishing some window plants; and what should that curmudgeon do but amuse himself by pinching off the buds; what were they good for? they only wasted time and attention. What good for? A pertinent question and I can answer it. Good for the message they render from One who mingles bright colors with the dull routine of life, sweet roses with smells of all sorts from the cook stove. Good for stirring in us

"Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Good for interpreting to us the wayside thoughts of God, kind, quaint, delicate, refreshing, and more than can be numbered.

Notice a rather singular circumstance. Of necessary food we have enough but none too much; the supply is strictly limited within a narrow margin as if to keep all the while on our lips a prayer for our daily bread, whereas of merely pretty things there is multitudinous and never failing superfluity. A thoughtful observer startled me by remarking that about the autumnal equinox each year the world is within a few weeks of starvation. I had never thought of it just that way

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before, but it is so. All the stored grain, dried fruits, canned goods on the market would not fill the fourteen hundred millions of hungry mouths a month if the regular harvests wholly failed, as they often do in part. But whatever else fails, the flowering and decorating never does; things that seem only ornamental and superfluous keep edging themselves modestly and affectionately and superabundantly into view, as if insisting that we see how the cup of life which our Father gives his children here is ornamented to the brim.

That this is a correct interpretation we may see by arrangements that we make for our own children. We do not merely feed and clothe them, and keep them tolerably comfortable. We entertain them with stories and playthings and songs and picture books and posies. Are these essential? They are. Half the life and joy of childhood is in that happy ideal world,

"The glory and the freshness of a dream."

And when thro' parental poverty or neglect no provision is made for this necessity you will see the native hunger assert itself in pathetic efforts of inventive skill—broken bits of crockery nicely arranged on a shelf as if they were so many costly decorated cups; a box of chips idealized into a Noah's ark, each one chip in the line marching up as an elephant or zebra or a Japhet or patriarchal Noah.

But never in God's arrangements for his children in this world will you find any scarcity of things designed simply and only to play on our imagination. It is by ministries of such things, not needed to keep us alive, that he keeps our lives enriched. The wrought brim is

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his device delicately introduced everywhere among common things.

So mother earth wears her necklace of lily-work in summer, of frost-work in winter, and plenty of flashing jewels tucked into her bosom. The hard, dusty roadside is adorned with greenery, and the night sky with twinkling chandeliers; horizons are gorgeous with sunset gold, the back dooryard is merry with a tilting titmouse chickadeeing all the year around. What fascinations of light and shade and color; of pleasing sounds and fragrances; of flying birds or butterflies and all sorts of creatures interesting to look at; of trees, rivers, waterfalls, showers, rainbows; of green vales and rolling pastures and cattle on a thousand hills. A subtile charm, nothing else nor less than the goodness of the Lord floods the air brimful like sunlight, the zones are girdled with it, all seasons wear it as a coronal, in it we live and move and have our being. Not a day in the year when we may not find some tracery of lily-work around the homeliest drudgery of life; the stiff day's work of course must be attended to, but the rim thereof is ingeniously and marvellously ornamented.

One result of this is that as the world grows wiser and tenderer, men find that life is more than it used to be, new and finer tastes must be provided for all the way up from primitive ways of living. Here is an incident illustrating this: an Englishman fell into the hands of cannibals; they considered him a prize for their peculiar purposes and with gleeful prospect reserved him for a great occasion. But the chief's daughter being tenderhearted managed to hide him and bring him food. This reminded him of Red Riding

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Hood, and with such signs as he could invent he got that story into her mind. The effect was magical. A new demand was created. Every day she must have a story, till guessing how it might work, she told the chief that if he would spare the man's life long enough to tell a story she would produce him. This was done. It all worked as she wanted it to, the chief and his warriors liked the story telling so well, they could not deprive themselves of that luxury even by satisfying their original expectations on the man himself. Now for the first time they discovered that life was more than meat, its edge was rimmed with fairy tales like the grotesque carvings on their drinking gourds.

Allowing for more or less touch of romance—and our theme would almost call for that—I am ready to believe this story as wholly true to nature. In fact tho it may not seem complimentary to say so, we have had a little story of our own not a whole hemisphere off from this. All we cared for at first was something to drink or to eat. After a while we were old enough to feed on nursery tales, picture books, Bible stories; farther on we drank from founts of music, poetry, art and song; at length like Kepler we began to think God's great thoughts; life was not meat and drink but righteousness and peace; sentiment, ideality, truth, duty, insight, worship, spiritual affection. The deepest demand in us was for realities of a world unseen; for harmony, for beauty, for love, and for a God who notwithstanding our neglect of him was tracing lily-work of goodness around our cup.

You may be wondering now if the minister has forgotten that bitter things are in the cup as well as lily-work on the brim. Not at all. We cannot disguise

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what is bitter, nor shove out of sight the unwelcome things of life. They confront us persistently and tragically. We must look them full in the face. Sin and suffering are here to stay; worse things are in the world than words can tell. What falsities, what iniquitous and atrocious doings, what injustice and brutality; what burdens, wrongs, pains, distresses, disasters, insomuch that many a poor soul is

> "——falling with its weight of cares
> Upon the great world's altar stairs
> That slope thro' darkness up to God."

All this is so. But yet after all that is worst has been spread out and surveyed in soberness till we grow dumb and pale and sick at heart, even then along the rim of the dense blackness we may surely look for some silvery edging. God was always front of men to give some ray of hope, some alleviating touch where least expected. The sorrowful way out of Eden was gilded with a promise. Jehovah talked kindly with Cain. Over the drenched and dreary world just flooded out he bent the fair colors of his bow woven with covenant blessing. The water in the hollow desert cup at Marah was bitter, but on its brim nature had wrought some green leaves that sweetened it.

Very suggestive is that Bible story. For all our ills and stings and hurts and pains there are near by antidotes and remedies; for all sorrows there are alleviations; even sin is ringed about with a marvellous redemption. Sin is as profound a mystery as ever it was; so is the distribution and volume of suffering, especially as it falls on childhood and innocence. I do not wonder that it brought from Michelet

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the cry "alas, was pain so needful that it must be prodigalized!"

To that cry there is no answer in terms of our logic or mathematics. But there is this one monumental fact to be kept in full view, namely, that pain was first and supremely prodigalized in the God who appointed it, who in all our affliction is himself afflicted, who in the person of his dear Son drank bitterness to the dregs and tasted death for every man. The cup which could not pass from our Redeemer was wrought with compassions of God's heart like lily-work, it was brimmed with forgiveness for the men who crucified him. The hour and power of darkness had come, as he said, but thro' it all I think the flower bells of Gethsemane swung out their sweetest incense, and Siloa's brook went softly as it never went before.

Awhile ago I was speaking of the over-plus and abounding variety of the pleasant things God has arrayed around us. All these we may think of as overflows of a benevolent heart. But when it comes to the serious facts of our sin and guilt it needs more than pleasant things even by the world full to meet the gravity of the case. That calls for outflow of another sort; and it came as one would never have guessed, it came when the Saviour poured out his soul unto death for us. This is the tracery depicted on the cup of salvation—the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. If it was

> "In the beauty of the lilies
> Christ was born across the sea,"

it was in the holier beauty of suffering for our sakes that he died on the hill. By that sacrifice we are

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certified that God meets us at the farthest bound of our demerit and in the sorest stress of our trouble; whatever cup is passed to us compassion and goodness may be said to be wrought on the brim thereof. There will be dry and hard places on the path of our pilgrimage, just there too maybe will be pleasant surprises. I can see even now on the wide El Rakineh waste above Sinai one solitary crocus that lifted its golden cup to some pilgrims on a sultry day. Even the melancholy desert is fringed with lily-work,

"And the crocus grows,
O the crocus grows
The old sweet way."

That lily-work on the brim of the cup was not needed for practical purposes; it added nothing to the worth of the cup as a utensil; nevertheless it was laboriously wrought in, a costly design of handwork; superfluous if you please—but, the only thing about the cup that interests us today is that same wrought brim. I do not think a cooling draft from the cup could refresh us so much this time as the flowery brim, for this last has beguiled our thoughts away from staple necessities, from hard facts, and made us see something everywhere on the rim of things prophetic of more and better things provided by a Father for his children.

It looks very much as if he planned that man should not live by bread alone, nor by words of old time only, but by every fresh and fragrant thought wafted to us on the summer breeze, or penciled in color on clouds, horizons, oceans, landscapes, rainbows, fruits and flower cups that toil not neither do they spin. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits;

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he satisfieth thy mouth with good things—but the principal thing is, as Paul said to the Lystrians, that he is filling our hearts with food and gladness. It was so yesterday, it will be so tomorrow. Looking backward we see that whatever the filling of the years has been, some softened and silvery lines of memory edge them all; looking forward, surely goodness and mercy shall brighten all the days of our life as already they gild the rim of the world beyond.

At any time the cup that represents our life may be plain and in it things we do not like, but one thing we can depend on—a divine ingenuity will all the while be skillfully wreathing loving kindnesses and tender mercies upon the brim thereof.

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To Find the Value of X

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

I. John, iii: 2.

1883.

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To Find the Value of X

WHAT we shall be. Here is x, the unknown quantity, and fascinating because unknown. It doth not yet appear. It sets us guessing and wondering. But wait a moment.

Doth it even yet appear what we are already. Job in his searching could not find out God, presently he learned that he could not even find out Job. No man can see God, but who that lives can see himself, or sketch his own portrait. You can look at your face with a mirror, can get a diagram of your brain, can figure your present capacity for mathematics or business or politics, can roughly estimate the sort of character you are. But the broad and various compass of the one you call yourself doth not yet appear.

While Aeneas at Carthage waited for the coming of the Queen, he noticed on the walls of Juno's temple picturings of the Trojan war, and soon among illustrious chiefs there figured

"*se quoque agnovit*"

he recognized himself. Much more important than old wind-swept Ilium are the fields that we are on today, and right in the midst you may recognize one figure tolerably familiar; *tu ipse agnovisti*, it is yourself; yet

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only in merest outline like some shadowy figure on the frescoed temple wall.

It doth not yet appear what you really are in your deep and permanent self today—you, just a common person but singularly gifted, and with free range every way, anywhere, from your plain door step to God's high pillared throne. No sooner have you recognized yourself even slightly than you are surprised at yourself. There is more to you, more in you, more for you than you guessed. And what is this but prophecy of some larger self that doth not yet appear. Yourself farther on. Did you hear John Stirling?

> "What thou art today, foreshows to me
> How greater far, thou soon shalt be."

Let x be the unknown quantity which doth not yet appear. Yourself in the larger view. Now to find the value of x, there are several things to be thought of and worked into the equation.

There is for one thing (a) the sum of your capabilities. How great is the sum of them. Suppose you have taken the inventory. Before getting it fairly into the equation, some new faculty or fresh adaptation begins to be distinctly felt within you, here a hint, there a flash, something indicating that you cannot take the measure of your abilities till tomorrow or next day or somewhere fifty years from now.

God has a way of folding up in every young life, qualities in germ; capabilities scarcely suspected, till, one by one, they come out from their hiding-places and show themselves to their surprised and pleased possessor. Something calls out a new faculty or facility, we are only older children gradually getting possession of our latent powers.

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On the floor at the east window I saw the baby playing with her little elephant. Suddenly she made a discovery, she found he could be made to stand on his rump with trunk projected into the air. This was an achievement. Thereafter the beast was not allowed to be a well-balanced elephant on four legs; the new attitude was insisted on to assert the mastery of a young mind, the imperial will of a discoverer. Now that memorable discovery was only one of a series such as we all have been making up the scale of our personal powers, from the mastery of cloth cats and elephants to the management of great affairs, including withal the orders we give off to ourselves as when we say inwardly—here, take this posture or position, work this problem, this job, stand to this duty and do it.

We have learned some things already. But I am much mistaken if we do not find somewhere, half hid, half revealed, in the machinery of our being, new ideals and motives always coming up; new peculiarities of temper, disposition and various idiosyncrasy; new susceptibilities to feeling, sentiment, affection, benevolence; larger powers of application, search, invention, endurance, patience, force, persistence; new and unique qualities of heart; bright thoughts that wake once to perish never; fresh energies, singular aptitudes, fine sagacities, undiscovered conscience, intellect, will; a sterner sense of moral obligation. These all, and more too, are in the problem of what we shall be. Elements of power

> "The which observed, a man may prophesy
> With a near aim of the main chance of things
> As yet not come to life; which in their seeds
> And weak beginnings lie intreasured."

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Sometimes this comes like a flash. Said a man whose original mind had struck out for itself a career its own, "In a little old schoolhouse in the pasture, sitting on a slab with legs so long that my feet could not touch the floor—there, seventy years ago I first got the idea that I was a power." That was Horace Bushnell. I think Richter must have been younger when he stood on the doorstep looking leftward at the woodpile and suddenly cried out "*Ich bin ein Ich.*" "Like a flash from heaven it came to me, then my *me* for the first time saw itself and forever it will be myself."

Not always does the magic touch come so early. One's most real self may lie dormant many years. Handel was forty-eight before the chord was struck that waked him to himself. Not till middle life did Grant discover the soldier that was in him. I wonder how Saul tingling with a sense of his masterfulness would act, if on the way to Damascus somebody should hint to him what powers of love are slumbering in his soul, what mingling of humility and chivalry, what self-effacing heroism. Unused powers must in every case be taken into account before one discovers himself, for it is a new and larger self that he is appointed to. It doth not yet appear what unsuspected force within you, or what awakening event outside of you may operate to shift the probability or certainty of what you shall be.

But to find the value of x, your undiscovered self, we must have not only the sum of your capabilities, but (b) the compounding of them, the adjustment, balance and correlation of them. Out of the same materials we get endless variety of results according to

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their combination. On the blackboard we see algebraic symbols, x, y, z, +, −, 8, 4, 3, 7, but in such new and various juxtaposition that what the value of x shall be doth not appear till each separate combination is worked out.

Out of his mysterious treasury of nothing God summoned four chief elements known to us as oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, hydrogen, and these four he so curiously compounded, adjusted to such perpetual variations, that with them for main foundations he has brought out the world and all that is therein—mountain, cloud, forest, river, air; flower and fruit; beasts and all cattle; dragons, behemoth and horns of the unicorn; ruby, pearl, onyx; common dust either flying on the highway or built without hammer or tool into the bodily frame that you call yourself. Nomenclatures of n, o, h, c, enter into everything.

Out of his veiled laboratory of spirit God has drawn four chief elements, which without trying to be too philosophical we may speak of as reason, conscience, will and sensibility. With these as main foundations he has brought out as many distinct variations as there are people in the world. Thus each soul of us is at the start a novelty, its like has not arisen before, its balance of parts is on a new formula, its unfolding is after a fashion of its own, its product all the way along will be a specialty that doth not yet appear. We like originality when we see it, therein we inherit the tastes of our Creator; and each one of us is to contribute one original life piece to his interesting cabinet of ideas, expression and character. He that wrought effectually in Peter one way was mighty in Paul another way, and in you and in me two other

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ways. Now the pattern of yourself being quaint to begin with, and never at any one time altogether worked out, it cannot yet appear what you will be when you get yourself rounded up more fully, each separate part in true balance and all working together nicely.

But to find the value of x your undeveloped self we must have not only the sum and the balance of your parts, but (c) the will-force that is put upon them, their direction and use, and the conscience that goes into them. Browning's idea is that

> "When the fight begins within himself,
> A man's worth something."

For one has to enforce obedience upon his powers, and likely as not that sets up a fight inside. You have good parts, what are you doing with them. Not in the tent nursing his wrath folding his sinews does it appear that Achilles is swift-footed, still less that he is manly. When you set to, to do something worth while inside yourself or outside, then it will begin to appear what you shall be, what you may arrive at. It happens that in real life the race is not always to the swift; it is to those who go and go right on. It is no mean accomplishment to be able to plod, as William Cary said of himself: it did not then appear that this plain plodder at the shoe bench was the man who would pioneer modern missions, master twenty-four Asiatic tongues and give the Bible to three hundred million men.

You had better give respectful salute to the habit of persistence, for it will be on the average a surer factor in the problem of x than first endowments—or, as

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Emerson would have us believe, practice is nine-tenths. He reckons that it took seven years' stumping it thro' England to make Cobden a debator, and twice that amount of stumping it here in New England to train Wendell Phillips. Very good. It is trained men, trained characters that we want. We have an extra supply already who are smart, or think they are. Promising lives have been spoiled by nothing worse than smartness inflating the organ of self-importance, or cutting the nerve of application, or sapping the strength of conscientious effort.

I would stand, said Dr. Arnold, speaking of one of his Rugby boys who was more persistent than brilliant, I would stand to that boy hat in hand. Some instructors and people not a few, would make the mistake of bestowing admiration on just the opposite principle, reckoning common work as merely pegging, no sparkle of genius in it whatever. True, but the grip of will-force is in it, and in the long run you may depend on this as the determining factor. It answers the question for each one what he shall be, and for human progress what it shall be. Great souls are those that have trained themselves to say, I will: and to say of some hard high thing, it shall be. God works his greatest works along this groove of man's determinations. One mystery of converting grace is this fact, that it cannot do anything for a man till his own strong will takes hold

> "——— to pick the vicious quitch
> Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
> And make all clean and plant himself afresh."

It is on this pivot of consenting will that each soul turns to God and begins the reckoning of a new value

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of x. Follow me, said Jesus to a man, and he arose and followed him. That reads easily. But it wasn't done off-hand, you may be sure. It took a forceful purpose to break away from the passion of money getting, then as now. Nor did it then appear that a pen sold under the spell and trickery of the tax counter would some day be writing the first Gospel. It doth not yet appear what honorable place or work or life any one may arrive at, if with intelligent decision he gives himself, his tools, his business, his abilities to the service of the Lord.

But to find the value of x, in your case, we must take account of another factor (d) the combination, the system of things that you are in and fastened to. That nut of iron in the carriage shop, as you and I see it, is merely a square bit of iron with a hole in it—but the carriage maker sees it as a very essential part of a machine, made to run behind a horse on the highway; what the value of that piece of iron shall be doth not appear, till, being in place, the carriage runs handsomely; or lost out, an accident befalls, somebody hurt or killed. The nut gets value from the machine it is in. The safety of my life may depend on the nut of a king bolt.

In your case, then, the value of x, your unknown self, must be reckoned not only from the sum of your capacities, plus the peculiar balance of them, plus the will-force put upon them; but also from the rank and import of the machine you are in—the completeness of which depends on your being in place properly.

Now this living, palpitating machine of humanity, who can compass the breadth of it, built of millions of generations of human lives, belted and cogged into one

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consummate structure. Who can detect its hid and intricate movement; wheel within wheel of influence; most subtle interplay of mind and heart and enterprise; and of contending or co-operating wills. Who can figure its prodigious importance, since to save it from going to pieces, God has in the person of Jesus Christ, riveted himself to it; who can paint the beauty of the finished product, which is, not the bringing out of a fresh clean unmarred company of souls, but the bringing in of scattered fragments of lives; mending and resetting in place, human beings that were total wrecks; actually polishing a race of souls dug out of mires of ignorance and iniquity; and setting on the brow of manhood the crown of immortal honor.

It doth not yet appear what critical values are in you except with full and glad consent you are in position, pivoted adjusted and bolted to your one share in the spiritual machinery of the world. Other lives than yours are in the problem, some touch from each one thrills along the entire shafting. What you shall be is defined in part by what other people are or will be because of you. Each life acting on its fellow is reacted on, and the value of x is multiplied by the values of more lives than I can enumerate.

> "For what man stirs a finger, breaths a sound,
> But all the multitudinous beings round
> Thrill haply in vibration and rebound,
> Life answering life across the vast profound
> In full antiphony."

Once more, to find the value of x, yourself that shall be, we must enter into the equation (e) the fact of a spiritual ancestry and relationship. Read the verse again and notice the first clause—beloved now are we

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the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. This means that much is to be expected from children of such parentage. Men reason that way always. There was something in the child of the peasant woman Spaco, so runs the story, that betokened a career above the ordinary. But when after some while it came out that he was not peasant-born but of royal blood, immediately great things were looked for, for now was he the son of a king. Now must he prove that Cyrus is the man for a throne.

Whose son is this stripling stepping into camp with the head of the Philistine bored by a sling stone? That question looks forward even more than backward. We can neither appreciate our birthright nor calculate our possible measure till we know whose sons we are and what it means that we are sons of God. Often it means nothing to us for the reason that we have assumed a different ancestry; we have known too well that we are wayward children as all our fathers were of a gainsaying and disobedient race. By unfilial disposition and doings we have lost good standing in God's family and almost lost any idea that we can be sons of God.

O, but this is not the way the Father wants us to think of it. He does not let go of us because we are naughty, nor does he allow us to be satisfied with what can be got in peasants' huts or in any far country of husks. Let the wanderer come to himself and he will know whose son he is and begin to guess dimly what he shall be. The story of every life won back to the Father is a romance; a story of love answering love, of soul knit to soul in the mystery of sacrifice and gratitude.

The value of x is to be computed from these noble

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factors not from any low-born or base propensities that make their unwelcome haunt within us. We will not blink the fact that we do badly, but neither let us miss the fact that we are ashamed of it and want to be quit of it, that a cry comes up from the inner deeps

> "——for a man to arise in me,
> That the man I am may cease to be."

Now it was to answer this cry that God sent his Son to stay awhile in this country, to be one with us, to get hold of the lost children and bring them home to the life of love. Almost the first thing he did was to get us to say Our Father; no sooner do we say that, affectionately and truly, than the whole value of life is changed, enriched a thousand fold. The coming of the Son of God was to bring many sons new-born to their birthright and inheritance. Now are we sons, here in the country-house as we might say; not hired servants but sons who share the father's plans, talk with him about the goodly matters of the spiritual estate, catch his intentions and do them—because we must? No, because we want to, because his will is ours and we will have it done in earth as it is in heaven.

So much for what we are here in the first period, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be as years pass or ages. I would like to apply the horoscope and report to you what aspects are taking shape thro' the veiled perspective—what unfoldings of mind and heart, what enrichment of sensibility, imagination, experience, character, what the value of x will be at the end, say, of the next millennium. At that far height, free of present-day entanglements, it doth not appear to me with what speed and many-sided growth you are distancing

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all my reckonings. Clearly you are the same person as now, with every characteristic mark and mood of your own self only carried to a higher power. What spacious intelligence, what nicely-poised and skilled abilities; what generosity of love, of service; what exhilaration and flush of spiritual life. Always it is better farther on, and yet I see

> "——we cannot reach the height
> That lies forever in the light."

The value of x, our future self, is an unknown quantity, unknown forever, and so forever fascinating —a, plus b, plus c, plus d, plus e, equals x. But infinity is in the problem; it takes eternity to work it; it will never be done. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. It never will.

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Through an Old Field

Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side.

Mark, iv: 3, 4.

1874.

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Through an Old Field

IT was on the border of the great plain of Philistia as thou comest up from the wilderness of Sinai. Sojourning many days in Meshech made us long for the sight of some green thing, and I well remember how delicious the little tufts of coarse grass looked as we neared the pool of Beer-la-hai-roi, where many noisy Ishmaelites got together. Presently green fields began to unroll themselves, dotted with anemonies and poppies and pretty silken-fleeced goats nibbling as if they enjoyed it. Here were the pasture grounds of the patriarchs where Abraham and Isaac pitched their tents and sowed and reaped. It says that Isaac sowed in that land and received in the same year an hundred fold for the Lord blessed him.

I was wishing that some belated sower would appear with seed to sow, that I might see just how that old time farmer used to do it. Owing to long rains it was not too late for putting in seed this spring being the fifth day of March; and to my great satisfaction as we rounded a rocky knoll on the left there opened before us a field freshly broken for barley.

And behold, a sower going forth to sow. He was a big fellow, well built; the seed basket hung on his

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left arm, and a pair of fish skin sandals dangled from his girdle. His back was to us and he did not seem to notice our little train as it wound along the edge of the field. We were all looking to see how he scattered the seed swinging his right arm to and fro with forceful measured strokes.

And it came to pass as he sowed some seed fell by the wayside and when we got there it was trodden under foot. This wayside was an ancient trail that we had just struck into from the east. Thousands of camels and asses and generations of men had trodden it. Along here the Midianites went carrying balm and spicery and a Hebrew lad down into Egypt; over this path the child Jesus was brought after that Herod was dead who sought his life. Others besides ourselves were on it that bright spring morning. Some were going with loaded camels to Gaza, some were on their way to Cairo riding Syrian horses, some were astride the haunches of diminutive donkeys swinging their toes out and in after the odd fashion they have there. But the sower paid no attention to any of us wayfarers, he kept right along with his work and the seed flew from his hand in curves everyway.

That that fell on the wayside either bounded off, or as I have said, was trodden under foot. Now the Doctor whose camel was just front of mine knew the country well, he had lived in Syria many years, was author of a work entitled The Land and the Book, so I asked him if seed would ever take root on such ground as that. You can see for yourself, he said, instead of dropping on a mellow bed where it can easily be covered, it strikes like a ball on the pavement, it is truth on the ear not in the heart.

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This I could plainly see, but how is it, I asked, that our wayside path answers to a man's heart? Why, said the Doctor, don't you see it is the many and constant footfalls that harden the pathway, none of them heavy but each adding a bit to the pressure—it is the great many wrong thoughts, desires, habits, or neglects and inattentions that harden the susceptibility of men to truth. Some of these may not be so very bad, others are, but all together they wear a hard path across the field of religious sensibilities; over which all sorts pass—easy pressures of indifference, the stiff heel of avarice, lingering steps of envy and jealousy, swift run of passionate feeling, tripping footfalls of pleasure, or stately tread of self-righteousness. So what can the word of God do but strike and rebound.

The Doctor was silent a few moments, then suddenly looking up he said—after all it needs nothing worse than neglect to spoil the heart for receiving truth. I am thinking of Agil Husn, a young fruit merchant of Sidon; the first time we told him the story of Jesus it affected him to tears, but not yielding his heart to it he soon lost all sensibility to that and to everything else we had to say. That I fear is what ails so many in our home land, hearers but not doers. It is painful to think that what seems like respectful hearing may become a process of heart hardening, just for lack of serious purpose and willingness to do something.

Seeing how Graves and I watched the sower as he sowed, the Doctor asked if we had any idea of the cost of a handful of seed. Graves told him we paid five or ten cents a package for garden seeds at home, but he couldn't guess on the cost of that which was flying from the hand of this sower. No, he said, I don't think

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you could; for that seed not only cost the sower all his last year's work, but all the work of all the years since men began to till the ground. It has cost the toil and sweat of generations of sowers and reapers to get a good quality of seed and perpetuate it. It is literally precious seed, and that's what makes it so suggestive as an illustration of truth.

Suppose you try to compute the cost of some of the seed truths of our religion, such as come to us in the short old Bible words—grace, truth, faith, peace, hope, love, life. Think what a history is behind these; what training of the patriarchs who sowed these very fields we are on, what burdens of the prophets up yonder, what ministries of love in Galilee, what blood and sweat in Gethsemane, what persecutions of the first disciples, what sufferings of good souls thro many ages, what loyalty and devotion to get the good seed, the simple unmixed Bible seed safely delivered to our hand as we have it today. You see it is precious seed, this little package of New Testament truths, simply reckoning its cost, not to speak of all its worth to our life and our future. And yet the best thing we can do is to keep scattering it abroad as the sower does.

While the Doctor was talking the sower continued to sow, and as he sowed some fell by a wayside lane that ran up into the field at right angles from our path. After he had got by I noticed a flock of birds flying from the branches of a sycamore tree just behind. They took a wide sweep to the south then up over this lane where they alighted and began picking up the seed as if they were half starved. It was interesting to see how hard they were at it, and how unconscious the sower was of what was going on behind him.

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I did not need to ask anything about this except the name of the birds, for I was not sure whether they were larks or sparrows. Beadle, who was riding nearest me now, said there was good authority for calling them wicked ones, catching away that which is sown where the sower soweth the word, tho I confess, said he, it used to go against me to have innocent song birds coupled in my thought with the wicked one. Do you see it any differently now, I asked. Yes. Things that seem in themselves entirely harmless do sometimes operate to steal away the seed of truth. It may be an innocent pleasure or a genial book or some demand of a refined and cultivated taste coming in just when attention is needed on the supreme question of life, that like these graceful birds get the seed away.

The sower continued to sow and I could see it was just as Beadle said, for those pretty little birds kept busily catching up the wayside seed. I was reminded of it years later when a person whom I will call Julius told me about his sudden loss of religious feeling. He somehow had an idea that the evil one had caught it away and wondered why he was at fault for losing that which he really wanted to keep. Well, I said, see how it is in the corn field; the fowls come to devour up the seed, what then? weave cords around the field which the crow likes not; weave network of watch and faith and prayer around the inner enclosure of which the devourer of good thoughts is always wary. Three months after, Julius referred to the matter again and told me that this was exactly what he had neglected to do, and he had no difficulty now in placing the blame of his decline where it belonged.

Our camels were striding along slowly till they

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brought us to a place where the ground bordered on a ledge of limestone. This ledge sloped into the earth very gradually like the shelving of a beach into water, and on the upper edge of it was a little pillar of four stones laid one upon another, set up by somebody years before maybe to mark some event. Rude little monuments of this sort we had often met on the desert and always wished they could tell us their story of love or loss or worship or whatever. One such pillar I remembered was set up some miles northeast of this field by Jacob at the place which he called Beth-El, but the name of which was Luz at the first.

Meanwhile the sower continued to sow, and some of the seed had fallen on the stony ground, or shallow ground that covered the lower shelf of the ledge. I was still looking at the pillar of four stones trying to construct some pathetic story to fit to it, when I heard others of our party discussing probabilities about the seed that had fallen there. One said it would never get a start on such ground. Another thought it would spring up pretty quickly because there was no deepness of earth for the sunheat to penetrate. Mitchell was sure it would make a start and then get scorched when the sun was up, so having no deep root it would wither away.

Mitchell had been over here nine years before and often seen withered barley in late spring on bits of shallow shelving soil just like this. But, said he, one needn't come so far as to this Philistia field to see that. Graves looked up enquiringly and Mitchell went on to say—you know that when the war broke out I was living in Richmond, indeed I barely escaped into the Union lines, leaving all my books and belongings

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behind. Well, that of course was not to my liking, but I did like Richmond as a field for seed-sowing, the people were open-hearted and receptive; indeed some at first were so easily persuaded that I feared it might be only a surface feeling. So in fact it proved, for when some petty tribulation came, something which they didn't just like, immediately they fell away, having no deep root in themselves.

I nodded to Mitchell that I understood what he was saying, and asked what should be done to remedy this shallow type of religion. Of course, he answered, there are differences in people, some natures are shallow to begin with and grow more so by habit.

The surface thoughts of such people are easily moved; but there is in every heart something lower down which the Bible calls the inward thought which is very deep; to reach this it needs the spirit of God convincing and converting. The case is not wholly unpromising even for a somewhat superficial nature. There was at Richmond a light hearted girl who seemed as you might say incapable of serious convictions about anything; it almost surprised me to find that something said one Sunday evening about cherishing and deepening spiritual influences had really impressed her mind a good deal. As time went on she developed unexpected strength of purpose and came to be a real good Christian woman. Mitchell thought we ought to seek the Spirit's transforming grace with all our sowing of the seed, for his heavenly influences working silently in the soul were as needful for spiritual life as sun and shower and mysterious underground workings in this old field to bring up the seed.

Yes, said the Doctor, God's husbandry—laying out

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this earth field with us in it, sending down little seeds of truth, supplying sunlight of love and storms of temptation and showers of blessing and quickening breath of the Spirit like the south wind—blow, O Breath!

While we were talking the sower continued to sow and as he sowed some fell among thorns, that is among bellan bushes bristling all over with thorns so thick and stiff that a goat would find it hard to get through. This was on a slope toward the north side of the field. Of course the sower did not purposely waste his seed among these bushes, but he did sow a bit of about ten paces adjoining, from which the shrubbery had been cut off and over which the crooked joint of a plow had passed. I should not have minded about this, but the Doctor pointing that way said there was the place to find seed among thorns; that strip of ten paces beside the thorn thicket looks well on the surface but the soil is full of thorn roots. The barley will come up, so will the bellan; but this last you see will have advantage of the barley in the strong roots native to the soil. It will crowd the barley under ground and overshadow it above worse than any witchgrass in your garden up in Vermont. The reaper will not gather sheaves from that which fell among thorns.

Beadle, who was now alongside the Doctor, swinging his camel halter to and fro as if thinking of something, took up the words at once—no sheaves from seed among thorns. It reminds me of my old friend Conductor Elkins of the New York and Erie. He used to tell me that he felt the need of religion and ought to be a Christian man, but the care of running his trains, attending to people and looking after so

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much miscellany absorbed all his time and strength, he simply couldn't take up religious matters at all. I didn't remind him of the sudden and final manner in which men of the road are sometimes relieved of all their affairs, but I told him of a man well known to me in Rochester, manager of one of the largest flouring mills in that city, charged with responsible and difficult business, who somehow found time to pray, to gather up a good bit of the pith and marrow of the Bible, to help his men on in the same good way, to attend church and now and then take a Bible class. I rather wondered myself, said Beadle, how he did so much, but the secret no doubt was that, like the ancient wall builders, he had a mind to it; the ground was not so wholly preoccupied with thorn roots as to crowd out other important matters. I told Conductor Elkins that if he would cultivate a mind to it, he could serve God while he walked the train, or waited at the station, or mixed with men, as truly as if he were reading a psalm or going to meeting, tho of course due time must be given for such things. But the fact is, and you see it everywhere, lots of things get in first, all the plans and jobs and arrangements and business and work and miscellaneous doings of the days that get rooted in the heart and choke the word that it bringeth no fruit to perfection.

Beadle began swinging his camel halter again as he had a way of doing whenever something interested him, till turning sharply to the left we saw the sower coming toward us, and as he sowed some fell on good ground, on soil that was light and mellow and ready to take the seed into its bosom.

Now there, said the Doctor, is a thing worth notice.

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That is good soil, as we say, but good for what? Simply for receiving something that will get life out of it. Lying there by itself the ground, even good ground, is good for nothing. But the sower comes along and drops something into it; that little barley corn sinking into it gets hold of dead particles of soil and somehow draws them up into its own life, converts them into a growing thing that rises green and graceful into the sunlight. The seed converts the dead soil into barley as you might say.

Why that, said Mitchell, makes me think of a gardener in New Jersey whose heart was as barren of religion as this bare field; one day he noticed in the New York Tribune something said by Henry Ward Beecher to the effect that it was the very essence of God's nature to care for a man in order to help him—a simple truth, but to him a wholly new idea which dropped into his soul like seed from another world. It was a coincidence, wasn't it, that on the very day he was planting sweet corn in Col. Pratt's garden, the seed of a new life had been planted in his heart, which within three months changed all his views of life and made a new man of him.

One would almost think, said Beadle, pointing over toward the sower, that this whole field, the soil the sower and the seed were made and fitted together on purpose to be for a parable. Men's hearts inert and dead to spiritual things until a sower comes dropping seed truths into them, but even then no growth unless the seed is received and hid in the heart to be working its mystery of life there. How picturesquely the Chief Sower outlined his own work in the sower going forth to sow; how skillfully he

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set each hearer in his true place, in the wayside, shallow ground or thorn patch; what a happy winding up of the story on good ground where they who in an honest and good heart having heard the word keep it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty and some an hundred.

While Beadle was saying this, the sower still sowed, but as he sowed we went on and he was left behind. I was glad to notice that the last seed we saw flying from his hand fell on good ground. Then the shelving ledge with the pillar of four stones came between us, and the sower as he sowed was hid from view.

But we kept on talking about him while our beasts made their slow way up the plain and across the Wady esh Sheriyah, till toward evening the white minarets of Gaza rose before us with here and there a graceful palm tree between. The plowed field was now far behind; we followed the tufted lance of Sheikh Hassein thro the sand dunes and orange groves that skirt the city, and at sundown of the twenty-ninth day out we were at the entering in of the gates of Gaza.

But all that night between the barking of dogs and the chattering of Gaza men on the Khan roof, there in our dreams was the sower going forth to sow, and as he sowed the last seed that we saw fell on good ground. And even now tho many years have passed, I can see that same sower striding the old field of the patriarchs, swinging the seed with measured strokes, scattering precious seed upon good ground, knowing that in due time he shall come again rejoicing having sheaves with him.

I remember too what the Sower said who went forth in the fields of Galilee—that he who receiveth the

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seed into good ground is he who in an honest and good heart having heard the word keepeth it, having heard he keepeth it.

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Uses and Powers

LITTLE ROD OF MIDIAN

And the Lord said unto him, what is that in thine hand? And he said, a rod.

And he said, cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground.

Exodus, iv: 2, 3.

Thou shalt take this rod in thine hand wherewith thou shalt do signs.

Exodus, iv: 17.

1881.

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Uses and Powers

LITTLE ROD OF MIDIAN

ON the slope of a hill fronting the morning sun was an acacia bush. One spring a green shoot started out and grew I should say about five feet long. Gradually it hardened into wood and was a corporate member in that bush. It had a place and share in bush-life and seemed to be filling it well. Suppose it had staid there forty years. All that while it would be answering the purpose for which it grew, helping to round out and complete the Creator's ideal of a perfect acacia bush. So much for the first use and value of a stick.

Now a second use is discovered. One day a man going by saw it there in the bush, fancied the style of it, stopped and cut it off and trimmed it as any boy would trim a stick to drive the cows up with. And then he went along switching it to and fro much pleased to see how well it was going to suit his purpose. Immediately now that stick has risen to new value. It was all right and doing well there where it grew in the bush, and might have staid there always to good purpose. But now it is coming to superior use, being in the hand of a man who will

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make it the instrument of his intelligence and turn it to the practical service of life; for by the charter of Eden every herb and tree is given to man for his use. There is the staff a lame man leans on, its beauty departed when it was cut out of the bush, but it has come to good use and honor. The other day I saw a child driving a barrel hoop with her stick, and I said, whether for hooping in flour or for giving glee to a girl the hoop and the stick too are counting for more than if green and graceful in the bush. This is a second use.

Consider now a third one. The plain stick may presently come to be more than a mere tool. Its value may appear not in the every day use, but in some association or sentiment that has grown into it. There is a little stick in my study, and I dare say there is one somewhere belonging to you, not worth a a cent of itself but we wouldn't want it used for kindlings. One thing that set me on to this theme was a little rod of Midian that I cut years ago at the edge of an abandoned hermit's cave in Horeb. It was an almond rod, budded and blooming blossoms that same winter morning—lineal descendant as I reckoned of Aaron's rod that God ordered kept for a token in the tabernacle. Such a stick as that of Aaron's is elevated above all common values; it has figured in the moral training of mankind and stands out for a sign over all generations. Belonging to the same family of sticks and memorable in sacred story is another one that comes to view at the second verse of Exodus, fourth chapter. And the Lord said unto Moses, what is that in thine hand? And he said, a rod.

Now this is that same which I was looking at—first as a green shoot starting out, then as a living

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branch giving shapeliness to the bush, then as cut off for a switch or staff to herd sheep withal; now finally wanted on new fields, unexpected ones, fields of Zoan, of moral ideas and conflicts. And its high mission isn't all fulfilled even there, nor at the Red Sea and the rock in Horeb. For every now and then in these busy times of ours this same little rod of Midian is taken hold of and lifted up by somebody for a talk on uses and powers and values; for a token to men even now that something is in their hands that God wants considered and turned to best use.

This apparently is the primer lesson that God is giving Moses. He is going to fetch in a rod that all the world shall wonder at. Where in the world can it be? Right there in Moses' hand; a mere sheep-stick, and as I am thinking, not a nice new shapely one either, but quite likely an old battered one that has been carried around ever so long. Moses must know the virtues and powers that are in an old stick used under direction.

It is a tough problem that he is brooding these days in the lonely backside of the desert. How shall his oppressed people be gotten out of Egypt, with what weapons shall they come? Weapons—it needs only one, and that one is in his hand now. But the power isn't in it yet, and will not be till he does exactly what God tells him to. Perhaps he will have to throw it away, then take it again. Perhaps it will act like a snake, then be the old familiar stick again. The main thing is that he must obey orders and learn the use and value of some common little thing handled in the fear of God.

Now isn't that forever true of whatever thing one

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has in hand any hour of the day. Why it is nothing amounting to much, he may say. Very likely, yet in most cases being the tool he works with, it amounts to a living for himself and family. That is something. And frequently there's more. The brush of Abbey, Macmonnie's graving tool, the wires of Edison get them distinction. And there's more yet, for if one handles what's in hand as he ought, he will in that very way be shaping himself to best use and increasing the value of the world.

So we may say that the old question is still out. What is that in thine hand? A serious question too, for it is from God, a question to set one thinking just what he is handling or doing, and what it all is for. If that in hand is counterfeit money, or a glass of strong drink for a drink, or a bad book or picture, the hand had better be cut off than keep hold thereof. Or if in thine hand is a good pen writing what is false, a clean book for ponying out a school lesson, a knifeblade defacing public property, be ashamed of that. Take any of the ordinary things that we find in our hands—a stick, a tool, a ticket, a pencil, a piece of money; a newspaper, arithmetic, testament; just everyday things but a great deal of life and character is in the every day handling of them.

There's always the plain ordinary thing and the extraordinary something behind it. It surprised the Caliph that Djablu's simitar was so inferior looking but when Djablu's hand was behind the hilt it was anything but inferior. Lincoln's pen may have been as homely as he, but righteousness went into it and forth from it went emancipation. There was the sheep-stick in Moses' hand, it wasn't polished up nor

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straightened nor feruled nor carved nor bejeweled nor any way made more presentable so as to compete in style with the sceptre of Egypt; but a process was gone thro, and at the other end of that the stick of Midian came out ahead of anything ever heard of on this planet before.

It must have been a remarkable process. One would like to know the secret of that thing. Suppose we interrogate the rod.

Little rod, what is the secret of thy powers? Doing what is told me. Is that all? Yes. Tell us about it. Why, I began as a bud, something told me to grow, so I pushed myself up five feet or so, and there I flourished in the upper air and enjoyed it, waving green leaves, playing with my fellows in the bush. Then one day something told me to lean over and I did so, and a man's sharp knife went hard into me to get me out of the bush where I wanted to stay. After that I was a rod in Moses' hand to do what he told me.

That's sufficient little rod, no more questions to a rod, for now we've come to the point where obedience will be intelligent, will know why it submits to orders and does the thing that is commanded.

Ho, Moses, what is that in thine hand? A rod. Cast it to the ground, says a voice. Now it has the undulations of a snake. Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail. Now it is a rod again, the same old, worn sheep-stick. Not just the same either, for since the doing of that which was commanded, new possibilities wait on the use of it. The world will hear someday about a little rod of Midian.

Now in this process of obeying orders, which to be

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sure, is'nt always to one's mind, lies the very secret of all powers and successes. You remember what the centurion said at Capernaum; I also am a man under authority. Because he held himself obedient under command, he was fitted to give command. It is so with us all. By obedience to the laws of life one gets command, facility, skill in doing things. Life, like the musical instrument, gives out its full tones and powers to the touch that is sympathetic, appreciative and obedient to discipline. It is by gifts of genius plus docility, discipline and submission to rule, that masteries are won on any field.

Say, Mister, what is that in your hand? A rod. What are those things drawn across it? Strong hairs. What do you do with your rod? Obey the rule, practice and drill. Then it came to pass that the little rod of Ole Bull was charged with power and command. It was a royal wand; all he needed to do was to lift it and men flocked under it. A British earl gave him a diamond. He set it in the end of his rod, so when he played men saw the play of a diamond. It was a diamonded rod. But nobody cared for that. Except the master had been obedient to discipline that rod had never been known nor diamonded.

That time the thing in hand was congenial; it suits me well, the musician might have said—I like it. But another time it may be a thing one doesn't like; no inspiration in it, no music nor poetry to be gotten out of it. What are you doing and what have you in hand? Plenty of hard-working people have to reply, just my job, nothing interesting to me; and we can see how often enough that must be so. The hoe is a hoe, call it that; the dish-cloth is not picturesque; your column

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of figures on the ledger does not suggest the Corinthian column; I do not recall that arithmetic or Latin grammar are particularly fascinating to a growing boy. A good share of life is spent doing things we do not really enjoy, or perhaps would like to be relieved of. What are these things in hand for then, in so far as they're not welcome?

Now I wonder if it may not be one part of a divine ordering for obedience of another sort? We obey when we adjust ourselves gracefully to providential allotments. It pleases us to see the boy stick to his fractions till he gets his powers that way. It pleases God that you and I do cheerfully the tasks that front us each hour of the day, putting soul and conscience into them. In that case we shall take more out than we put in, for not only do our cordial fidelities in that which is least please the Master, they also drill our spirits to best uses and powers. What we do is more than the thing done; it is spiritual capital gained by doing it upon honor and with good heart.

A man was telling me yesterday of a four days' piece of work he finished last week. I didn't make anything worth while out of it, said he, but then, I would sooner have lost money on it than not do it all right and to suit. Now I'm sure we shall agree that he did make something well worth while, he made more of himself, his deposit was in the bank of character that day, and the merchandise of that is better than silver; costlier too sometimes, even to reversing one's plan of life.

Ho, young prince in the palace of Pharaoh, what is that you are carrying so grandly? The baton of the house of Rameses, for I'm of the royal family. Cast it

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to the ground, says a mysterious impulse, cast it down.

And prince Amosis cast it—and for forty years he is in the lonely wilderness of Midian. Being obedient to the will of God, he refuses to be called any longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. One doesn't make that choice against all human nature without a stout pull and manly purpose, but the supreme will that requires it will brace the will that moves toward that decision. It was so when Moses forsook the pleasures and treasures of Egypt; that very hour his reinforcements arrived, and thereafter he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Serving God begins with surrender of one's self to God and endures in the strength that is distilled into life from the invisible. One seems to be praying into vacant air; not so, he is talking with God, making contact, drawing powers into his soul from the unseen. Then after awhile it comes around that whatever he handles or operates will begin to take on meanings and powers not suspected hitherto. It may require time but the day shall declare it.

Ho, Prince Amosis, what is that in thine hand? The baton of the house of Rameses. Cast it down! And he cast it.

Forty Years' Silence.

Take it again! And Moses put forth his hand and took it, to wit, the rod, and with it all the powers that the baton of Rameses ever stood for. These and more too are in the Midian sheep-stick now. This in the hand of the obedient man is a storage battery equal to any demand—trip-hammering Egypt or cutting a sea in twain or touching rocks into water springs.

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So much for some practical workings of obedience. It pays well, and if it didn't it is the thing to do all the same. Conforming, as Bryant saw under the calm shades of the forest, conforming the order of our lives to the beautiful order of God's works, and so arriving at our best estate.

For thro obedience we get our uses, our powers; under obedience we are able to round out the pattern of life that God sets for us; enforcing obedience on ourselves we help to make the world orderly, dignified, prosperous and stable. Reverence for law will rid us of anarchism in all of its large or small varieties; obedience to the golden rule will be the sure settling of industrial turmoil; Christian honor insisted on, advances property values; tools do their best work under loyalty to God's will; the pen that is responsive to divine ideas will write the world's enduring poetry; silks are going to sell well where truth is written on the yard-rod, for trade like water must follow the channel of least resistance to God's appointed way.

So ordering their small affairs under God's rule, men may any time find their affairs lifted into partnership with God's great ones, as the staff was that Moses carried. On the other hand a false note destroys the harmony, some wrong thing lurking in the heart obstructs the current of power.

Ho, Gehazi, what is that in thy hand? The prophet's staff. what will you do with it? I'll work a miracle at Shunem. But when this extempore miracle-man gets there and applies the staff it doesn't work. Why should it? What good powers could any man of his mean spirit get out of that or of anything else.

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Ho again, Gehazi, what is that in thy hand this time, up there in the tower? Two bags of silver. What are you going to do with it? I'm going to be a rich man. Yes, all that silver secreted in the tower, and on thyself and thy children after thee white leprosy. In thy hand the staff of power is powerless and the coveted silver is a curse, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

No Bible writer ever said that money was the root of all evil, but what is that in thy hand, thou man of greed and avarice? All the world knows what it is; it is money perverted from noble uses and powers to work soul-killing deceit or stinginess; it is a rod of unrighteousness, lineal descendant as I reckon, of magicians' rods that did so with their enchantments on the field of Zoan, the baton of the money-getter calling forth serpent broods of lies, swindlings, frauds, oppressions, crimes and woes.

This is one way, but if money be in a man's hand under right direction how noble its uses for sustaining and adorning life! What powers of beneficence folded up in it, like buds and blooms and almonds in the dry rod that Aaron's name was on! What is in hand means much; how held and used means more.

Say, such a one, what have you in hand this Sunday morning? A Bible. Very good; that's a thing to be handled thoughtfully, for if you read it not obeying, there's the greater condemnation. It is a plain little book, not two inches thro from lid to lid, nevertheless it is high as heaven, deep as hell; salvation is in it, perdition too, if one despise the grace it brings. Hide God's word in your heart and your life will become God's living word, a new translation exactly

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fitted to the people you live with. They will learn from you the uses, the powers of a little book that tells a great story.

Yea, have ye never read therein of One who carried all powers in his hand? And have ye marked this—that he was in no haste to outgrow subjection to his mother, that he did alway the things that pleased the Father, that he learned obedience by the things he suffered, that he became obedient even unto death? He made himself a total sacrifice to the law of love. Thereafter his hand held the powers of life and the keys of death and the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

As with him the Master of life, so with us all as disciples learning from him the uses and powers of life. It isn't a question of some one thing or other held between thumb and finger, but the deeper question of what we are, thro the disciplines of our years, what powers of soul we carry and how used.

So I am asking now, what is that which you hold in your own self? what gift or talent have you in hand? what capability or influence, what charge to keep have you? Nothing to speak of, you may say; not worth much at the best. Now if you insist upon it we'll allow for once that that is so. You're not good for much, not worth much, cannot do much, a mere stick among the branches of humanity.

Very well, God has a way of turning sticks to use, getting powers into them, making insignificant ones famous. He likes to make strong men out of weak ones, very useful lives out of common folk. He can use all kinds, only they must be usable. Moses at court is gifted, cultured, princely; reckons himself equal

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to a splendid dash for the freedom of his people, but his scheme doesn't work—perhaps it needs forty years with a sheep-stick to show that for great undertakings God hath chosen foolish things, yea things despised, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

God has use for the great man as soon as he gets down from his greatness and is docile and meek-spirited, but he has a thousand times more use for the multitudes of average people who are not great except in docility and kindliness. He is using these by the ten thousand in all sorts of places every day of the year; thro them he multiplies streams of blessing like brooks in Horeb running from the touch of a little rod. Thus undistinguished people are worked into most important uses. Out of ordinary material, just the every-day human stuff, a sort of spiritual nobility is erected. In this noble order he is greatest that serveth.

Do you not know that most of the finest accomplishments, the sublimest heroisms of the passing days are never announced in the newspapers; it suffices that they are written in God's book. It will all come out in the great day; a little cup of cold water is painted into the record; those that are faithful in that which is least, will be wanted over ten cities.

I salute them now, unknown by name, hid in sequestered places, distributing cheer and good will, not leaders in the fashionable world but diamonded in the judgment.

Say, good friend, what is that you are carrying? Just a common life. Very good. Cast it down in obedience. This is what the Saviour did every day;

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he laid down his life that he might take it again. Cast your life down in love before God. Lo, that act of loyalty makes it more than common, transforms and dignifies it. Now take it again. Lo, it is a new life, inspired, empowered, set to the great marches of God.

Little rod of Midian, it is a good lesson we have studied this time—uses and powers by the way of obedience. We would learn that lesson well and practice it every day. That's sufficient little rod.

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The Ideal of the Scale.

A just balance and scales are the Lord's.

Prov. xvi: 11, R. V.

1886.

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The Ideal of the Scale

A BALANCE is useful for weighing, also it is suggestive of an idea. Some things which men make have no higher significance than utility; they are useful, but not elegant nor likely to figure in the realm of ideas. You do not get any ideal truth or principle out of a cook stove, a refrigerator, a cast iron plow. These are indispensable conveniences in practical life, but they have no place in the vocabulary of high thought and sentiment.

Suppose now we look at a scale. The sort referred to often in the Bible, the old even balance which has come down to us it may be from before the flood. Do we not see in that something more than a handy contrivance? Useful it certainly is in traffic, but useful on a higher plane as representing a principle. The balance is itself a symbol of just and honorable dealing. It stands for fairness and truthfulness in all transactions, for that which always ought to be. It represents an ideal thing, and that is why it has figured not only in the market place, but in poetry, mythology, art, religion.

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Job cannot better declare his integrity than by saying, let me be weighed in an even balance. No Egyptian could hope to stand accepted of Osiris in the judgment, except his life weighed well in the scales of Horus. Even to this day, the devout Moslem sees in the Mosque of Omar at Jerusalem, the sacred balance in which the souls of men will be tried over against the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The balance is surely more than a convenience in trade. It has taken its place among emblems of truth. Absolute justness, equipoise of character, the right balance of things have revealed themselves on its delicate pivots. And the merchandise of these is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

But where were these ideas found in the first place? Men made the scales, but who made the idea of equity and of exactness that caused men to feel the need of scales and then to lift them up to the rank of emblems? The ancients were in the right direction of an answer when they hung the figure of the balance in the hand of a goddess. To their minds the even balance was a divine idea.

So it is to ours. We have read in our Scripture that a just balance and scales are the Lord's. The idea which they suggest to us, originated with him. The balance and the scales were the Lord's before they were ours, and they will be his forever. Every operation of the scales is a declaration to us of God's sense of equity. It is not strictly true that men have invented scales. They have discovered that which God originated, and turned it to practical use. The balance and scales are the Lord's; the original pattern is his, all his affairs are conducted on the principle of exact relations which

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the scale typifies. When he swings out a planet it is accurately poised. A just balance of forces pulling against each other holds each globe in place. For thousands of years the constellation Libra has visibly represented to human imagination

> "———his golden scales, yet seen
> Betwixt Astræa and the Scorpion sign,
> Wherein all things created first he weighed,
> The pendulous round earth with balanced air
> In counterpoise." * * *

It was at the autumnal equinox, when days and nights just balance each other, that the sign of Libra was entered on the ancient Zodiac. The astrologers were on the right track. Had Isaiah been among them he would have told how God hath

> "Measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
> And meted out heaven with the span,
> And comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure,
> And weighed the mountains in scales,
> And the hills in a balance."

God founded his universe as it were with a balance. His work of creation proceeded on this principle of equipoise. When he hung out his invisible scales, the waters were divided; the waters that were under the firmament balanced the waters that were above the firmament, and it was so. On one side of the scale was day with its hum of life and energy; on the other, night and rest, throughout all generations. Over against the families of plants, of trees and herbs that breathe through their leaves, God set the families of moving creatures that breathe with lungs, so that each should breathe what the other could not, and God saw that it was good. And there was evening

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and there was morning, the sixth day, and behold, all things were in an even balance. And God rested from the work which he had made.

Now perhaps you will be asking what about human life—is that in good balance? Apparently not. Something has happened. We are not in Eden today. A great shock of disobedience has thrown us out of equilibrium. What confusion and upsetting of the ancient repose, as though

> "———God bid his angels turn askance
> The poles of earth twice ten degrees and more
> From the sun's axle,"

to indicate how sin had disarranged his perfect order.

We must not forget to take account of this whenever we try to balance up the actual experience of life. Disobedience before God is an awfully heavy weight in the scale against us. We shall make poor work of it trying to satisfy ourselves with what is, if we under-reckon the weight of sin. Men say, how do you explain to us the doctrine that God is just, in the face of all he has let come to pass? I do not seek to answer, the answer is with God. But let us keep two things in mind; first, the sin that has defiled us, second, the grace that saves us, and that has eternity in which to adjust the balance. In the light of the darkness that lay on Calvary, I reckon the sufferings of this present time accurately weighed in a true scale. It is easy to be staggered at some movements of the beam along our short horizon. But what are we? What do we know? Hearken O Job! Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds? much less of human life.

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"For, take thy ballaunce, if thou be so wise,
And weigh the light that in the East doth rise.
Or weigh the thought that from man's mind doth flow,
But if the weight of this thou canst not show,
Then how canst thou those greater secrets know
That dost not know the least thing of them all."

"Whatever thing is done, by Him is donne,
Ne any may His soveraine power shonne,
——nor weigh His workes anew."

His work is perfect, a God of truth, just and right is he. A just balance and scales are the Lord's. Therefore will not we fear, tho the earth be removed, tho the mountains be carried into the heart of the sea.

If the just balance and scales are the Lord's ideally, typifying his accurate adjustment of all things, then whoever first devised a balance for practical use between men, was operating along the line of God's thought. He may have been one of that ancient family of a mechanical turn, sons of Zillah, artificers in brass and iron. We do not know. But we know that when Abraham the friend of God was transacting business among the sons of Heth with religious accuracy, he weighed out the four hundred shekels of silver in the balance to Ephron the Hittite, and the field and the cave therein and all the trees round about were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying place, by the sons of Heth. During thousands of years that primitive balance stood betwixt man and man. It facilitated business, it declared that equity should rule in trade. Yea, amongst the heathen traffickers, was the figure of Astræa, the goddess with the scales in her hands.

But the ways of men change, tho the just rule never changes. The old balance was not enough for the new

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commerce. The steelyard of Rome was not equal to the needs of today. When the age of business energy was fully come, it required a superior scale—a scale commensurate with the merchandise of continents—a scale equivalent to the ponderous machinery of factories—a scale that could lift up a loaded train in the balance as a very little thing.

Then God sent into the world a man who should think his thoughts after him, and introduce a change in the ways of weighing that had been in use for millenniums. He led on the mind of his servant from one device to another; along imaginary queer-shaped levers, over knife-edges, up perpendicular rods, amongst poises and beams and loops; till at length, gradually outlining itself thro the darkness came the combination of levers that makes the platform scale of today, over which rolls the traffic of the world. This curious balance and scale was the Lord's. The man when he first caught sight of it felt it was the Lord's, not man's, and whatever might come of it should be to the honor of God.

One night last week, being wide awake, I seemed to see something. It certainly was not a dream. I should say it was a vision seen by the mind, coming all at once, so swiftly and completely, that, lest I should fall asleep and lose something of it I straightway got up and put the outlines thereof on paper.

I seemed to see, amidst the darkness, the scale, which God, not man, had set up. A certain weight was hung from the beam. It was not marked in pounds and ounces, but with the ancient Hebrew character—IYSH.

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Iysh means—a man. I saw that here it marked the weight of a man's best self. It seemed to be the index of God's plan for one man, the ideal of what God wished one man to be. As tho God had set that weight on the beam and said, now shall it be seen whether this one man shall fulfil my purpose, and, according to his ability, balance this weight *Iysh*, or whether it shall be writ of him some future day, *tekel*, thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting.

Then I saw in my waking vision a man slowly, carefully toiling thro long years to lay on the platform of that scale, qualities and attainments that should balance the ideal of life which God was gradually unfolding to him. I do not say that he succeeded. I only recognized the fact that he was aiming to fulfil an ideal.

Meantime I noticed that the first thing which appeared on his side of the balance was a spirit of Reverence toward God. It seemed as if the vanishing figure of a pious mother was hovering near to make sure that this worshipfulness and simple faith in God should become the earliest and centremost fact in that life. Also it seemed to me that when that sentiment of veneration, and of early piety went on to the scale, the beam thereof moved perceptibly.

Presently I saw in my vision how the man was putting something else on the scale. And when I could read what was written thereon, it was *tabnith*, Pattern. And I saw it meant that the man did things according to the patterns. It meant that he was very exact in whatsoever he did, or wanted done. He might have been called a pattern-maker, only that I think the patterns were given him on some mount of superior

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vision, and that a still voice was saying in his soul, see that thou do all things according to the pattern shewed thee. Consequently with him, it made a great difference whether a thing was pretty nearly right, or right. If it was pretty nearly right it was wrong, and must be done over again, and yet again, and again, till just right. Only so, could he become a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, approved unto God; for this rule in mechanics was the rule in religion also, and in religion first of all.

Soon I saw another element showing itself on the scale. It had the appearance of persistence, Firm Will. Would you call it pertinacity? wilfulness? Hardly that, if one's face is seriously set in the right direction. To bring life up to the standard hung on the beam would require a life habit of persistence, a stiff holding on to the thing in hand. If a young foundryman drawing a load of pig-iron forty miles, is brought up suddenly after dark in the mud by a broken axle, we should say he had better find the nearest shelter and quietly wait for daylight. But if on the contrary, going in to the neighboring thicket he shall get down a young tree, trim it and shape it with his pocket knife to the hub of his wheel, brace up the load, attach the new-made axle-tree, and drive on thro the mud so as to reach home by daylight, we shall infer there must be in that young plow-maker some of the stuff that makes weight in the scale. And if in later life it be found that he is not easily baffled, but quietly takes hold of difficulties and holds on persistently, making everything out of nothing, we shall come to like it as an element of dignity and strength. We shall think it right for such a man to hold his matured opinions

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strongly. Perhaps he has learned to see farther than some do, and if a mistake or harmless foible falls out here or there we shall not be in haste to pick it up and publish it.

Now I saw in my vision that the man of firm will was also loading up the scale with a goodly bulk of Gentleness. He believed that the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, especially if any chance to disagree with him. Thus it came to pass that vague prejudices creeping up now and then like a fog, melted away and were no more. The edge of criticism was sure to be turned by a soft answer.

His speech did not appear to be rapid, nor his use of words forceful, but uniformly

> "——an accent very low
> ——and a most silver flow
> Of subtle-paced counsel,
> Winning its way with extreme gentleness."

Now in the old Bible, conversation signifies behavior, and without doubt this conversation, life-long behavior was according to the gospel of Christ; eminent for the fifth of the fruits of the spirit which is gentleness.

Moreover I marked another quality enlarging itself upon the scale, as the years went by. On it was the lettering, thrice repeated, *Nadib*, and I straightway saw it to be by interpretation that which was spoken by Esaias the prophet—the liberal deviseth liberal things and in liberal things shall he continue. It was not that silver and gold were being weighed out on that scale. Every one knows that they are heavy, also that they count nothing in making up the weight of *Iysh*, a man. The Lord hath use for silver and gold, corruptible things, wrought into benefactions. But in

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the scale that indicates the Lord's will about a man, it is the liberal spirit that weighs much. Therefore it happens that the poor weigh more in the balance sometimes, than the rich; for if there be first a willing mind it is accepted as weight in this reckoning according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. Now I was sure that, according as God had prospered him, the man at the scale was a cheerful giver, the same whom God loveth; whiles by the experiment of this ministration he glorified God in professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ.

I will tell of another thing, which, if my vision was true, the man never failed to have on the scale in large weight—in double weight, SS if I might so say—Simplicity and godly Sincerity. In the midst of great prosperity it never appeared that he was spoiled. Unexpected success did not throw him off balance. One could not see that the smell of the fire of vanity had passed over him. A writer once said that he would walk a weary journey to the utmost verge of the big world to kiss the hand of the man who in the height of prosperity and honors would

> "Preserve a lowly mind; and to his God,
> Feeling the sense of his own littleness—
> Be as a child in meek simplicity."

I think it would have pleased that writer to see the vision of the scale and the man thereat. Affixed to the man's person he might discover imperial insignia put there once by other hands than his; decorations from oriental courts or from the land of the white elephant; he might even be tempted to salute him, Sir Knight! or Commander-el-Iftikar! But the earnest, demure face of the man would forbid that, and before long it

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would appear that the decoration most prized by him was not the knightly cross nor the barbaric cypher, but that other one which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God, of great price; which is on the scale, of great weight. Most certainly the scale beam indicated this as the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God he had his life-conversation in the world.

The vision did not pass till I had seen one thing more—distinctly. Over all the toil of ninety years to balance that scale aright, was written this inscription,

> The life which I now live in the flesh
> I live by faith in the Son of God,
> Who loved me and gave himself for me.

This was the last that appeared that night; but shortly I caught from somewhere the sound of a sweet salutation, the same that floated over the waters of Hiddekel long while ago, as if One said—O man, unto thee am I now sent, for thou art greatly beloved. And now thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of days.

In the morning I knew that a soul had passed,* whose work at the scale was done. I do not say he filled out the ideal set before him or balanced the weight set on the beam. I know he tried to.

May each of us aim to fill out according to our capacity the full character-weight of one soul, on the just balance and scales which are the Lord's.

* Sir Thaddeus Fairbanks; senior member of the South Church.

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A Symphony

Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts!
Ye ministers of his
That do his pleasure.
Bless the Lord, all his works,
In all places of his dominion.
Bless the Lord, O my Soul.

Psalm, ciii: 21, 22.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord.

Job, i: 6.

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

And the Lord said unto Satan—from whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord and said—from going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it.

Job, ii: 1, 2.

1893.

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A Symphony

IT is a symphony of service that I am thinking of—the interplay of lives that are loyal to God. As

> "———mind and soul according well
> May make one music,"

so may the blending of many wills toward one high accomplishment—the total effect will be harmonious like that of an orchestra. In fact, as a critic of music has pointed out, the orchestral symphony is itself a play of life, interpreting in its mingling strains not only man's emotions, but also his toils, experiences and victories.

Extend this conception and we have a stage wide as creation, and performers as many as all the loyal sons of God, each with a part of his own to carry—and thus the true symphony, the universal one of worlds and of ages.

This, you may say is fanciful—very likely. It is the statement in kindred terms of the familiar fancy of

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modern poetry—the whole creation moving to one far-off divine event. Poetry follows faith when it sings the beautiful order of God's works. Nor is this idea altogether modern. To the same key the old bards of Israel pitched their notes. A waft from one of them has floated down to us,

> "Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts,
> Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure
> In all places of his dominion."

By the side of this I have set a bit of stage scenery from the prologue to the drama of Job. It is pictorially suggestive, not to be taken as a record of something that happened once and again, but as the poetic statement of a great truth, namely, that in the spiritual sphere all present themselves before the Lord awaiting orders, or again, returning to some family reunion or rehearsal, have something more to report than saunterings, walking up and down and going to and fro somewhere.

And the style of the prologue lets us hear imaginary interrogations addressed to this or that one—whence comest thou? hast thou considered my servant such a one in earth or in the outmost planet? hast thou gone thro the chambers of the south? or hast thou heard the chorus of my sweet singers in the cluster of the Pleiades?

This, you say, is rather fanciful. Yes, and so is a good part of all that lifts or inspires us—poetry, psalm, drama, parable, celestial vision. Most likely Marlboro was correct in saying that he got more veritable English history from the plays of Shakespeare than from the books; not the exactness of facts, but more

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of the spirit and stately movement of old Britain. So here and elsewhere in the Bible, notably on its last pages, we are treated to dramatic play with scenery wholly imaginative, yet of the same spiritual significance as that which we ourselves are in and part of. These sons of God are unlike any we ever saw, yet not altogether unlike us in structure nor in destination, for they and we are sons of the same Father, actors in the same drama of spiritual things, each in a way appointed to parts in the same high symphony of service.

Considerable play for our thought is allowed in that family reception that is pictured on a day and again on a day. With a sense acute like Paxton Hood's one might be catching voices transmitted thro the wireless blue—

Uriel—I, Regent of the sun, have found by what way light is parted and I have seen the sitting of the seven colors and the arching of the bow in the balancings of the clouds, and I praise the beauty of thy works and await thy will.

Yophiel—I have skirted the firmaments and marked the unfurling of streamers of light: I have seen the fire-mists whirling out of darkness and ancient void, and a new world taking form where thy will shall be done as it is in heaven.

Lucifer—I descended the slope that points toward the new world. And I went to and fro in the earth and walked up and down in it. And I found there a garden planted eastward and a mist going up and curious trees therein but no inhabitant. Nor do I understand how any great glory can be displayed on so inferior a world as that, tho I do remember now that all the sons of God shouted when thou layedst the foundations thereof.

Cherubim—We are they who were stationed east of Eden to keep the way of life and make it plain to men. Thither Abel brought his offering and God had respect unto him, and there mercy and truth did meet and justice and peace kissed each other.

Michael—In a valley of Moab over against Beth Peor smote I Satan contending for the body of Moses: moreover unto Joshua, son

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of Nun, said I, be strong and of good courage: and on whatsoever field the Lord of Hosts shall appoint will Michael and his angels fight the dragon and his angels.

Raphael—Thro the wheels of the ringed world that men call Saturn, I led the quiring bands down the ladder of light, and over Bethlehem we sounded glory to God, good will to men: and to One in the likeness of man pledge I the loyalty of Raphael and twelve legions of angels.

This, you say, is altogether fanciful. Yes, but after the manner of scripture, and intended to group in one scheme of dramatis personæ sons of God of more worlds than one. It is no creation of fancy but strictly true that we and they are in the same combination, under the same polity, looking on the same creation, operating the same forces cosmical and spiritual, working toward the same results—unless one out of sorts is only going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it with doubts and cynicisms.

Moreover if some of the transactions of the elder sons are on a scale above what we are adjusted to, some others, as reported, are within our easy reach. One of them is said to have assisted an outcast woman on the desert to where she could refill her water-skin; another one seems to have fired some coals and baked a cake for Elijah. The grandeur of these performances is not overpowering tho done by celestial powers. You and I would be just as capable as they of lending a hand to some poor body stranded in a wilderness of trouble or down flat under a juniper of despond. Any average person could bake a loaf or carry one that somebody else has baked where it would do the most good. In the old Bible stories I see ministries of angels and men mingling in one wonderful order which is withal a true symphony of service.

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Nor is this all, for from here and there I see other actors emerge and set themselves to certain parts in the service tho never capable of knowing why they do it. Look this way and I will show you pictorial shapes of flying things and beasts of the field, yea also whatsoever passeth thro the paths of the seas, moving straight up to some determinate spot or performance as if under orders, and in the march with Michael and all angels.

Who is this advancing at the front of the Israelitish host? This, it is said, is the angel sent with them to drive out the Amorite and Canaanite. And what is this, advancing in the front of the Israelitish host? This, it is said, is the hornet sent with them to drive out the Hivite and Hittite. Angel and hornet, whatever this hornet be, mustered into the same company going up on the same business. So, too, went angel and raven when they took turns feeding God's prophet, the Tishbite.

And now if there were a day when the dumb creatures of God could present themselves intelligently before their sovereign, and their tongues be loosed to report their obedience, I should expect to get some interesting messages across the line.

I should hear the hornet reporting how he and his swarm stung the uncircumcised Hivite; the frog how he took his station, as commanded, in the dough of the kneading-troughs of Egypt; the cows of Ekron how they pulled the cart with the ark of God up the straight way to Bethshemesh lowing as they went because they wanted their calves; the lion of Benjamin how he slew the Judahite but took not a mouthful out of him; the Mesopotamian worm how she crawled up east of

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Nineveh and gnawed down the gourd that Jonah sat under; the caterpillar how he enlisted in God's great army of palmer-worms, canker-worms, locusts and caterpillars; the fish of Tarshish how he landed Jonah safely, and the fish of Tiberias how he bit at Peter's hook and delivered to him the silver coin for taxes; the donkey whereon yet never man sat, how he stood a long while where two ways met till some men came along and said that the Master had need of him. This, you say, is fanciful. Certainly, and for a purpose.

These mingling shapes terrestrial and celestial I've thrown for a moment on the canvas of our thought to bring more clearly into view the Bible conception of a management that guides into one harmony all grades of intelligence and of life. Looked at from this point of view the scheme of the great Director is taken up by all these multitudinous parts playing harmoniously together, insomuch that I speak of it now as a universal symphony of service. And, if you listen, a strain of the far away chant will sound again in your soul as tho the morning stars sang together and many sons of God shouted, cheering one another on:

"Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts,
Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure:
Bless the Lord, all his works
In all places of his dominion."

This is a high-going strain. I wonder if we got the whole of it? It almost seems as if something were lacking, as tho one distinctive note was needed to complete the score. Where then shall it come from? what quarter of the universe holds it? who is equal to fetching it in? I am—and I will sound it:

"Bless the Lord O my soul."

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Does this seem an intrusion, presumptuous, out of tune with the deep-mouthed music of the heavenlies? On the contrary it is the one missing note from many a life that is wanted to round up the perfect whole. The symphony of service is not complete so long as one wayward soul is out of it. Indeed the pivot of interest in all that's been coming up to view is not some winged spirit that excels in strength, but one that is unwinged, standing on two feet, feeling very unfit and small and inadequate, but appointed all the same to carry a part in the great symphony and give answering refrain:

> "Bless the Lord O my soul:
> And all that is within me,
> Do his pleasure."

Not always however does he see it so. Sometimes he is going to and fro in the earth and up and down in it, doing nothing in particular; seeing what is going on, getting what amusement may be had for the money, shying off from trouble and responsibility about equally, with grave doubts as to the value of Christian institutions but never a doubt about the importance of having a good time. He said so plainly within my hearing on the train the other day: "I take things right end foremost, go where I can get the best, carry a season ticket to the pick of theatres, in with a splendid set of fellows with plenty of money and always sure of a good time."

Somebody may ask if it is forbidden to have a good time. By no means. God wants everyone happy, but it's against the constitution of things that anyone should expend himself on himself alone and come out happy; he must contribute his full share of energy,

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character and good will to the good of all, or he misses the main thing he was made for, and with that, all true satisfactions. To miss the mark is a Bible definition of sin. There's a lost chord and the symphony of service is not complete. Modern science is of the same opinion. It requires that a man shall be in harmony with his environment; if his life does not contribute to the good of other lives he is out of tune.

I will read you a letter now that gives out an approved program of life. It was written by a student to his father up on the old farm. "I have, I trust, now dedicated myself to God who formed me for his glory and I consider myself bound by every possible obligation to be active in his service as are those ministering spirits of his that excel in strength and do his pleasure. My business shall be to pass thro the world not merely with comfort, reputation and perhaps a degree of usefulness, but to attempt the greatest good, exert every faculty, go where he shall send me and most cheerfully execute all his commands."

How invigorating is this ideal of life as against the one I overheard that day on the train. This was the young man who kept his promise of going wherever God should send him, by coming to St. Johnsbury in 1814 to teach district school, and by going in 1822 to teach the gospel in the capital of Turkey. William Goodell was his name. Fifty years he filled with the spirit of that letter, every year of the fifty flooded to the brim with resolute endeavor and bubbling good cheer. This is not an unheard of thing either, thousands like it are on the roll; I light on this one because the letter happens to file itself into my present theme.

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And what I want to ask is, if one such as he is not younger brother and fit companion to one who took an order once to fly swiftly with special despatches to Mesopotamia, and again delivered a message in Judea, saying, for certification, I am Gabriel? Verily, I think so, and so far as I can find, the one who didn't have wings did his part as well, enjoyed it quite as much as the one who did. In some points I should say even outranked the other, as for one thing, holding on to a hard discouraging work for forty years without any intermediate exhilarating trips to paradise till in 1867 God called him up there.

A man sometime ago surprised his audience by remarking that if the choice were given him he would be, not Gabriel but Brainerd, the missionary, who mended rail-fence, taught Susquehanna Indians, coughed out his life under a bear-skin on the cold ground. He meant, I suppose, that he would choose the total experience, the devotion and afterglow of one who had reached the crystal floor by the path of lowly service and hard testing of the mettle that was in him.

This way of thinking is not after the manner of most men. It stops one in the way; it sends him plumb down into himself to enquire what he thinks about it. If he think honestly and seriously he will be saying presently; yes, to serve God in any place that sorely needs our love and cheer and help is better than to float in light; to give one true heart and hand toward making this a brighter world is, for awhile at least, a better way of filling out the high symphony than to be amongst harpers harping with their harps.

And we may as well go on to say of every one of God's sons or daughters who on earth do deny and

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devote themselves, enduring as seeing him who is invisible, that even now they touch the heavenly strings of the symphony of God and more than

"—— vie with Gabriel while he sings,"

Forasmuch as the soul that sticks lovingly to its task anywhere in this world of sin and shirking, is already in the high peerage of the principalities. Indeed I altogether believe it was after some such fashion of tested loyalty that they got their princedoms in the first place. First, faithful over a few things, then ruler over ten cities. If that be true in one world, even a small one, it stands the same inviolable in all.

The ruling ideas of the spiritual realm are identical at every point, in the earthly or any other province. What is earth but one of a family retinue attending the sun and his remoter sun—built as the spectrum announces of the identical stuff of sun and stars and cosmic nebulæ—the self-same flaming hydrogen, or sodium and calcium, the same iron and copper and zinc thereabouts that we know and handle and fashion into tools. And what are the laws of stellar bodies but the same that wave their invisible sceptres everywhere around us, so that the pebble you toss across the way shall tally in its curve with the swing of earth around her sun and of the sun around his wider path. It is a universal symphony of obedience and precision that makes the music of the spheres, whatever that may be.

Talk we of morals or of mathematics, it is all the same. Wherever we may alight a millennium from now we shall do our reckoning by the same arithmetic that we studied in the district school. No advanced science of upper worlds will ever make the square of the

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hypothenuse other than equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

The right business way of doing things must be identical among all employees on God's vast estates; fidelity is spelled the same way in our speech as with the alphabet of Oriel or Abdiel.

With this difference to speak of, they excel in strength, we in weakness. But they in turn might answer—you have the Eternal Son born into your family, he is one of you, not of us. In him you can be stronger even than we, his humiliation and his coronation are for you, that makes your place in the family and your note in the song rank high. And besides, you are exactly fitted to your place. No other could ever do things there so well as you.

How undeniably have some who walked the common ways of life here found that out and proved it true. In the weakness of their mortal frame they have kept spiritual step with those who stride among the firmaments of power; able to do all things and very surprising things, Christ working in them.

Not only does the spirit of Christ in a man harmonize all discordant elements in himself, it also sets the entire note and content of his life to the great symphony of love and obedience. Loyalties of heart like strains of a sacred hymn belong to all ages, all worlds. They go right on forever to

> "———Make one music as before
> But vaster."

Group together all who have served God among men, and their varying lives give one main tone pitched to the keynote of Christ. If we could see them coming

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on a day to present themselves before the Lord, I think one interesting thing would be the harmonious mingling of all sorts and ranks of men.

Kings of the earth, crowned or uncrowned, from Charlemagne to Washington and Lincoln—also undistinguished Smith and Jones.

Judges of great fame, statesmen of the type of William of Orange and Gladstone—others good and faithful in their small way; the man with a hoe, the stoker who did not desert his engine at the crash, the woman whose hard work at the wash tub kept her little flock together.

Some garlanded with laurel, Dante and Milton of epic tread, and Tennyson and Whittier and all daughters of sweet and sacred song—also some whose garlands were of plain sewing, of good housekeeping, of nursing the sick and caring for children.

Artists who spread sacred themes on canvas, Leonardo, Angelo, Murillo, or who like Handel and Haydn rolled them into oratorios—artists of a different type much needed, who could turn duty into song, and light up their common days with cheerful color, making service a beautiful thing.

A clear-eyed company sighting God's great thoughts among the stars, Kepler, Newton, Herschel—others who had eyes bent down to find fragments of God's image in the lower strata of man's perversity, poverty, misfortune, ignorance and heathenism. Say, princedoms, virtues, powers! what are these arrayed in plain dress, toilers in dark places for Christ's sake—what are these but angels of mercy indeed?

It is easy to see that such as these lived for something more than going to and fro and walking up

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and down in the earth. Whatever their rank on society's blue-book or off it, they constitute the best there is or ever has been on this planet,

> "Earth's elite of every land,
> Men of speech and action grand,"

and queenly women entitled to carry Ithuriel's revealing spear or to wear the white lily of Gabriel.

In tune with such as these I want the honor and the joy of one life part, and so do you; contributing every day some modest notes of our own to the great symphony. It is not so much where we are or what we do, as that we are in tune—so that God's will shall be done along the whole gamut of day's doings and wide world affairs.

For not after one pattern nor in three ways nor four will God fulfil himself in us any more than aforetime. These days of construction call for builders and mechanics who like Noah will do according to all that God hath commanded. We want the spirit that went into the old carpenter's kit of Nazareth and into Dr. Luke's medicine chest. The business man may not, like Levi, leave his desk, but stick to it and make it one of the high places of the land. God used to find good workers on the farm or sheep pasture, why not now? If church and state are standing places for trained faculty and sanctified endeavor, so too are office, train, shop, field, and especially home and school which call for so many divinely feminine accomplishments all the way from making butter to exploring constellations.

The one sweet and swelling harmony of earth—what is it, but this age-long doing of God's will by all

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who do it. And this means not a few, but the hundred and forty and four thousand a thousand times and a million times multiplied, each one in fashion and ability as distinct as yours or mine, carrying one part toward rounding up the symphony of service.

Also, as if to heighten the effect, mysterious powers of earth and air seem to come out from their hiding places and chime in with forceful parts. For even they are not mere cosmical arrangements, but blind agents on the spiritual field, ministers of truth and judgment and redeeming grace. If on a day they could present themselves among the sons of God with tongues to speak, what mighty acts might be rehearsed—by these his angels, the flying winds, and those fierce ministers of his, the flames of fire; by rains that streamed out a flood from opened windows and seven colors that wove their strands into a bow of covenant; by darkness and hailstones and lightnings and cloudy pillar and stars fighting in their courses, yea sun and moon in their habitation hasting not to go down

> "At the light of thine arrows as they went
> At the shining of thy glittering spear."

If cherubim and seraphim continually do cry,

> "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth"

an acted antiphon of service ascends from sun and stars, from dragons and all deeps, from clouds his chariot, and darkness his pavilion, and the firmament showing his handiwork, and from all his works in all places of his dominion.

This is not fanciful, it is reality. All his works work together with his loyal sons to get his will done in earth as it is in heaven.

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A Symphony

Therefore I am asking myself and you, good friends, what part are we carrying in the universal symphony? what strain of intelligent, cheerful service to mingle with the music of the ages? For my part and for my brethren and companions' sakes I will now say:

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
Bless the Lord, O house of Aaron,
Bless the Lord, O house of Levi.
Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength,
Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure—
Kings of the earth, and all people,
Princes and all judges of the earth,
Both young men and maidens,
Old men and children,
Bless the Lord all his works,
In all places of his dominion—
Bless the Lord, O my soul.

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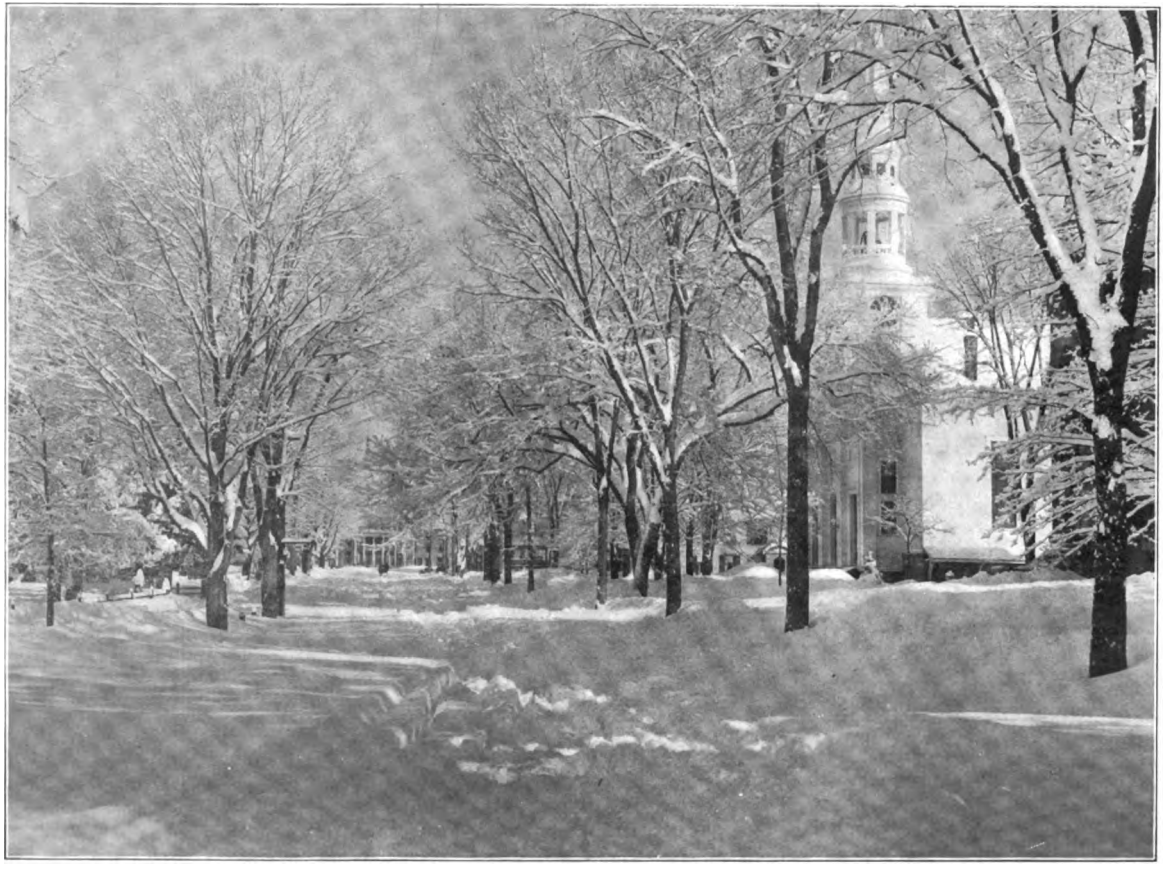

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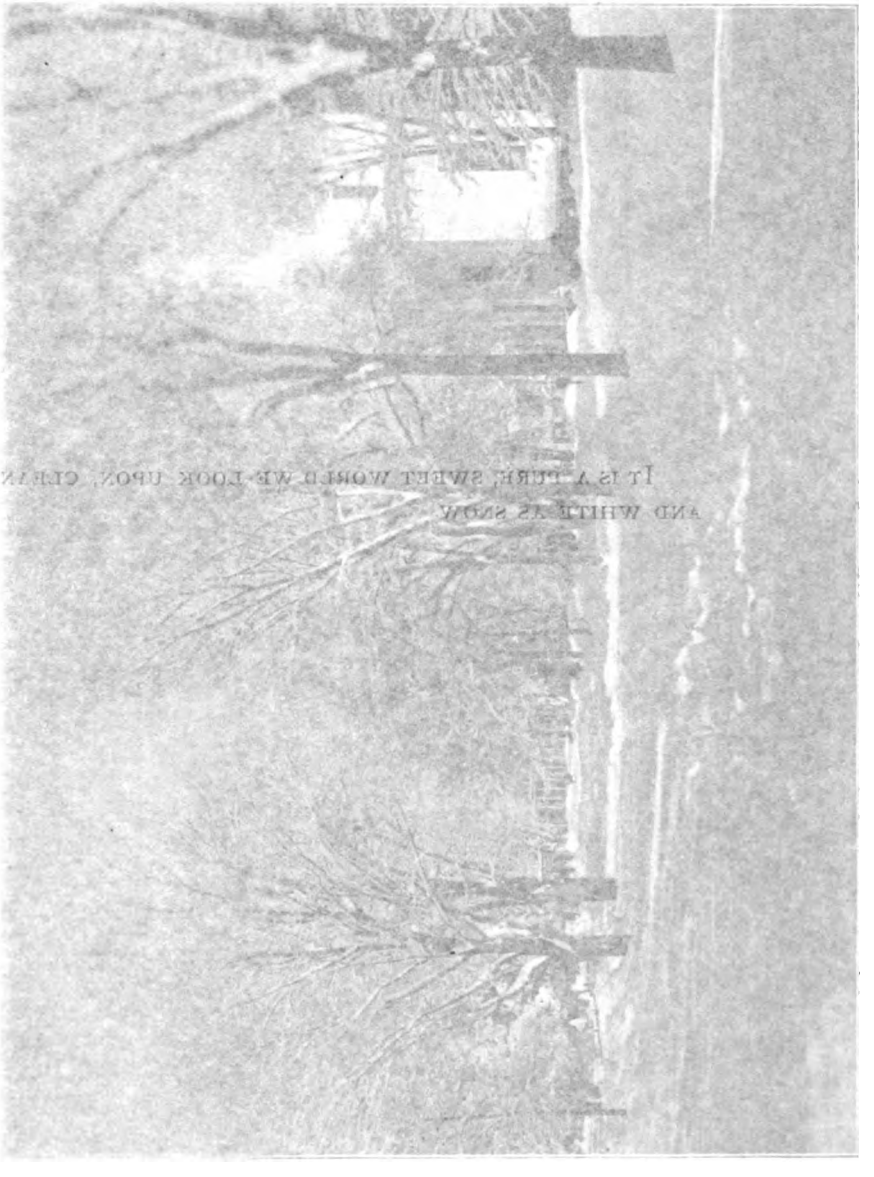
IT IS A PURE, SWEET WORLD WE LOOK UPON, CLEAN AND WHITE AS SNOW

1899.



As Snow

White as Snow.
Daniel, vii: 9.

White as Snow.
Mark, ix: 3.

White as Snow.
Revelations, i: 14.

White as Snow.
Isaiah, i: 18.

Whiter than Snow.
Psalm, li: 7.

1890.

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As Snow

BY many repetitions in his word God associates that which is pure with snow. This we can readily understand for nothing is more delicately white and pure than snow just delivered from the sky. The fine lines of its myriad stars, the lightness of its downy fleece, the sparkle and sheen of its folds in the winter sunlight suggest better worlds than this.

That was a question to set one thinking when the Lord enquired of Job if he had entered into the treasures of the snow. We are more apt to enter on some discussion of discomforts that come with it, than into any treasures that may be hid therein. We are thinking of cold weather, tedious winter, snow drifts; and what comfortable times people are having in Florida.

But every place and season has its compensations. There are some treasures to be had here in northeastern Vermont. No exuberance of the tropics could render a spectacle so nearly spiritual as that which met our eyes when we woke this morning. Over the hills, thro evergreen boughs, on the tips of elm twigs, along the flat field from sky-line to the edge of the window frame it was heaven let down to earth.

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At the equator we might be seeing what it is for the righteous to flourish like a palm tree standing green and graceful on the dry desert. Not only is the scene and suggestion very different here, it is much more refined and celestial. A whiteness woven in the skies is silently dropped upon us and a voice from the sky bids us look for treasures in its folds. These for our present purpose will be some things set before our thought as white as snow. Five of them according to our five Bible sayings.

First—there was the garment of the Ancient of Days which as Daniel saw it was white as snow. By this was indicated the purity, the holiness of God. Notice how much more is given in scripture than bare statement. It is written, God is holy. We never doubted that, but when thro the seer's vision we saw how the Ancient of Days did sit in his garment of snow on a throne of flame, the conception of holiness became picturesque.

Looking out now on the wintry scene what is it that we see? Not common snow lying all around, not even fairy festoonings of the fir trees, but a robe fit for God to put on, to veil the fierceness of his splendor, to make purity sweet to our vision.

Second—it is the raiment of a man that is seen to be white as snow. This man came one day up the mountain side. High in the background is the head of Hermon

> "Crowned long ago
> On a throne of rock
> With a diadem of snow."

Here on the slope he is standing wistfully. At home he is known as the carpenter, also as a teacher and healer.

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He is not taller than other men, nor differently built, nor more richly dressed. In fact his dress is very ordinary, a plain robe of dull color such as any average artisan would wear; there's no pretense of priestly cut or fabric about it, nothing to give out that his soul is whiter than others.

But lo, for once the reality asserts itself; the pure spirit that is within shines thro, illumines the face and even whitens the dull dress as no fuller on earth could, till it looks snow-white and glistering. Now against the background of snow that descended on the mountains of Hermon is this Son of man transfigured and entitled to appear in the robe of the Ancient of Days.

Third—this same Jesus rises to view again, coming suddenly out this time from the unseen in splendor. He wears whiteness for a crown, his head and his hairs as white as snow.

We may enter into some of the treasures of the snow thro the lens of a microscope, but it takes visions and transfigurations to open up its deeper suggestions. Snow is something more than a sample of crystals dropped from windows of the sky, it is more than fairy decoration for Christmas landscapes; snow is a revelation to the eye of the beauty of holiness.

Fourth—we have now something different from visions, a straight matter of fact statement—tho your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. This is a surprising saying, if snow really means the same here as in the visions. Apparently it does, the pure white of soul. Now this is what none of us have, to begin with. Also it is precisely what we are appointed to arrive at finally. This is the divine program, the

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gospel of God, to bring a sinful heart up to snow standard.

Wilful disobedience of God is painted the color of scarlet, a bad color scripturally—note the great red dragon, and the bad woman, mother of abominations, who flaunts a scarlet gown and sits on a scarlet colored beast. How different this from the pure sweet white of snow. Did you ever come suddenly upon blood-stains on the snow? that was no canny sight to look at. Sin is scarlet seen as God sees against the snow white of his holiness, unbearably offensive; also double-dyed as the word means, deep in and fast color. But saith the Lord, let us reason together—tho your soul be as scarlet, if you turn to me and be willing and obedient you shall be white as snow. It would be hard for us to believe that, if we did not know that God always means precisely what he says.

Fifth—we have the same great truth taken up but at the other end of the line. This time it is a man who speaks, in the shame of his bloodguiltiness. So bad is his case he can do nothing with it. He puts himself at once and as he is, in God's hand without any doubt as to what he needs and what will be done for him—

> "Create in me a clean heart, O God,
> Renew a right spirit within me.
> Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

He knew it was no use to try to wash out himself. We will thank him for writing down just how he felt, and for giving us the very words of his prayer, for we all need to learn it and to pray it. Some may be cleaner than others, but what does that signify. I thought that house was white till the snow fell, then it didn't

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look so white, and besides how ugly the stains all at once became. Our goodness does not look so good when we see it by the side of one life that never knew an evil thought.

A few pages front of this sinner's prayer we find an upright man who fears God and eschews evil; he is all right so far, till he gets a sense of God as holy—then he thinks if he should wash himself in snow-water and become never so clean that way it would be as if he were still in the ditch. Upright Job and faithless David alike need cleansing by the same Spirit, so do I, so do you.

Rain enough in the sweet heavens to wash this little hand? No, Lady Macbeth, not enough, nor virtue enough in it either. It needs more than rain or snow-water, more than baths and immersions; the trouble is spiritual, so must the remedy be, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

We are to see that sin is scarlet, deep-dyed but not ineradicable. Its curse is on every man and on man's affairs. Yes even on the ground for man's sake. But what is this that we see?

Over the ground that seemed hard and dark as if a curse were on it, God, while we slept, folded the best robe heaven's looms could weave, and now looking thro the crisp morning air it is like another earth. Every ugly thing is out of sight, rough angles are rounded into curves, roofs and fences fringed with feather-work, the clumsiest cart is a celestial chariot and the refuse heap a dome of beauty. It is a pure sweet world we look upon, clean and white as snow.

And what we are to see in all this is something

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more than a wintry snowscape; it is a vision to certify to us that after the dark night of sin is over we shall see a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. And any day or night meantime on the way toward it, when the wayward son returns to the Father—off with that scarlet! bring forth the best robe, the white one, and put it on him! for this my son was lost and is found.

We must, however, note the fact that no absolute nor continuous whiteness can be expected here. The earthly state does not admit of any one supremely perfect thing of man. There is endless antagonism between the earthly and heavenly. At the early snow-fall it is a question whether we are to have clean snow right along or abundance of disagreeable slush. At any rate the white is soon soiled, its purity outraged by offensive things of all sorts. Only new supplies, as of grace, sent down from above every day can keep the snow surface clean. Even then its time is short, this earth is no good place for so etherial a thing as the snow-flake. It must come to humiliation here, its airy tabernacle be taken down, its whiteness seem to perish as it dies into muddy water, lost apparently forever.

Is that so? Not at all. Like the soul whose story it is now figuring to our thought, it simply lays one body aside and takes another. It rises from death in the vapor-wreath, its spiritual body, and is caught up into the air. Bosomed in the fleece of the cloud it floats in light.

We become aware as we go along in life of some surprising things. Here is one. God is not only tolerating this world, he is getting out of it material for beautifying heaven. It would seem incredible that men as low down as many are in this earth, could ever

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be made fit for a pure world. Yet that is precisely what is being done. Albeit nothing short of a divine and spiritual alchemy could effect it. Even in the slums of sin one is not beyond reach of transfiguring grace if his face be set stedfastly upward toward God.

Look some day as you are passing by, at any dirty stagnant pool of water, a wayside puddle or swamp or even cesspool. There is a thing offensive to sight and smell, unfit to touch, polluted with fever-germs, stained it may be with blood, a spectacle to get away from as fast as you can.

There it is, the hateful thing with its bad odour and slime. But so long as its face is upward toward the sun some silent energy from heaven will come down and work therein. Already its face begins to reflect the pure blue of the sky. Presently the subtile working of sky-powers begins to gradually draw it upward, away from the foul marge. Mysteriously, silently it is evaporated, caught up into the bosom of the white cloud. And some cool day, drawn up thro God's air-filters and refrigerators it is wonderfully transfigured into flying six-rayed crystals that go careering above the firmament and playing thro the sapphire blue. It is the new birth of the snow, born anew from a mud-puddle.

Now I have read from an old letter, of some men who by the names given them must have been about as bad as men could be—idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, extortioners, revilers. This perhaps was not surprising, but now comes a thing that is, for says the writer—such were some of you, but ye are washed, justified, sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, by the Spirit of our God.

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Born anew out of the cesspools of Corinth, that wicked city, as also even out of Sardis, and afterward taken up to walk in white which is the righteousness of the saints.

Very surprising as we think of it is this replenishing of heaven with what was once the scum of earth. We uncover our heads and adore the grace that works that way. We are not forgetting either that the very same transforming touch is needed for the finest respectabilities of man's life. There has never been but One in our human family whose heart could bear the searchlight of God's holiness. It needs his spirit renewing ours to bring the whiteness that is imaged in the mirror let down from heaven white as snow.

This whiteness of the snow is a thing apart, there's none like it. Other things are white but the white of snow is peerless—a selected white for the veil of the Ancient of Days. Now the secret of this snow whiteness lies in the structure God has appointed for it. It results from the play of light over multitudinous little mirrors sharply cut and set in all sorts of ways at every possible angle of incidence and reflection. Each flake is an aggregation of prisms each one of which catches the sunlight on a different slope from the rest, and as the rays fly flashing to and fro amongst the myriads of polished surfaces there is woven for us the white that is white as snow, a whiteness refined and delicate, as it were sifted out from the great white throne.

But now another remarkable circumstance. However many these myriads of snow crystals of all manner of outline, they all alike conform themselves at the center to one unvarying figure, namely the

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six-rayed star. Every flake that ever came down, first had stamped on it this divine pattern of the hexagon,

> "Six rays are set upon the star of snow,
> If these their constant order could forego
> Sun, moon and stars would break their sacred plight."

On this foundation of the sixes then, God has set the innumerable company of shapes bearing feathers, fronds, banners, spear-points, needles, disks, crescents, crosses, scrolls, fringes, flowers, ferns, ten thousand times ten thousand variations, but every one conformed to the pattern given in the mount.

You will see what this means to my thought just now. We may conclude that a soul is at least becoming white like snow when it catches the pattern and reflects the likeness of our Saviour. It was this that made fellowship possible between the converted rakes of Corinth and men of the style of Paul and Sosthenes. On this foundation of likeness to the pattern given, any man whosoever he be can be at home in the family of God. There are in this world today people of all varying shades, ranks, temperaments, gifts, peculiarities, experience, who differing much in many ways are at the center conformed to the pattern and living Christlike lives.

And report has reached us from another world of a great multitude whom no man can number of every nation, kindred, tongue and people, who have this same defining mark as a seal on their hearts and a name in their foreheads. When I think of these multitudinous hosts mingling in one atmosphere of love, reflecting the Redeemer's likeness as from myriads of polished

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mirrors at innumerable angles of peculiarity and experience and activity, it seems to me the effect must be radiantly beautiful like the peerless white of the snow. May we find our place and part therein in the great day.

Just now and for awhile longer this world of sin has more need of our Christian presence than heaven has. Here is where our Lord in love and pain wrought out the pattern, here he wants us to show men what it is in every day living.

Our first care shall be to give ourselves to the imprint of his Spirit. That mark on each disciple is determinative as the six-ray mark on the snow star. One star differeth from another star in all manner of diversity. Every star in God's spiritual firmament will be a unique variation on one incomparable pattern, Jesus Christ the bright and morning Star.

That new-birth mark will show itself somehow on the life of every true disciple. His affiliations are not with mire but with stars. His place is in the train of the Ancient of Days whose robe is white as snow.

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Thanks for the Ordinary

And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

I. Kings, xvii: 4.

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Thanks for the Ordinary

I AM in the mood for some talk about the ordinary. Just now at the end of the century it is mostly and very fittingly the extraordinary that is fetched into view. The splendid and alluring panorama of a hundred years passes before us. We view with admiring wonder the unfolding of thought, invention, discovery, adjustment, mastery, that has put a new face on the world and given bounding impulse to man's endeavor.

Not for a moment do I forget that all this is grand in reality and big with promise for the future. It is inspiring, exhilirating, a challenge to every man to set his life with seriousness and cheer to the forward march of the world. Ten thousand handy, fine, ingenious products of modern mind are not one too many if they can be surely made to serve the best ideals of life. There is no reason for wanting to get back from railway and telephone to stage coach days; we haven't any use for the old fashioned surgery; nobody is going to be exalted into a more worshipful mood by reinstalling a set of smoky whale oil lamps

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in place of the electric illumination that floods God's house this hour with something of the light of his throne.

But how to use the new facilities and refinements without getting fastidious and luxurious, or losing relish for plain, substantial things is quite a real puzzle. Aboriginal simplicities still continue to give their charm to childhood, but it isn't long before they evaporate in the rarified atmosphere of the times. It takes a good deal to keep up the interest of life. Discontent with the ordinary is not far from becoming a contagious disease.

Look out anywhere and see how it is—fashions go at so rapid a rate that only the smart set can keep up with them; each novelty of dress, art, books, foods, play, or whatever else, whets an appetite for fresher novelties; community is craning its neck after the next new thing; people want to be immensely amused; public speakers must be so uncommon as to draw; newspapers must have graphic scenery; the entertainment is nothing if not spiced with original or startling attractions; it needs no longer crops, cattle, pigs and poultry, but balloons and vaudeville to make an agricultural fair. The fever is on for what is off the ordinary and out of the plain. That's one reason why I like to get back once in a while to what is simple, plain and old-fashioned, and to stir up some clear note of thanks for the ordinary.

Considerable virtue is still to be found in some things that have been from the foundation of the world; things to use or to admire and thank God for—such as air, sky, sunlight, stars, rain and dew, ground, grass, trees, flowers, rivers, birds, creatures wild

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or tame, quiet homes, books, people, daily work, something to eat and drink.

And it shall be, said God once to a man, it shall be thou shalt drink of the brook and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. Did any of us, I wonder, ever pity the man that he had to go out there in the wilderness with only a brook and some wild ravens for company? I think not. More likely we've thought such an outing for a while would be quite interesting. In fact, some of us have tried it, camping out in the woods, living a wild life, chatting with chipmunks, birds and frogs and crickets, relishing our plain fare and ground beds, having a real enjoyable visit with old mother Nature. Here was the brook, as of old, curving, chattering, babbling, bubbling, going on forever. At home we sipped our tea from cups of porcelain, delicate, shapely, hand-painted, choice treasures of the china closet. Out here a dented tin cup, maybe, but cup or no cup, here's the brook itself, the overflow of a brimming cup God placed high up the mountain side—and it shall be thou shalt drink of the brook and listen to the lulling music of its flow and lie on the ground looking into the trees and wondering why people must have so many things piled up around them.

It's astonishing, said the editor of the Ladies' Home Journal last week, how much we can do without, and be a thousand times the better for it. This is not exactly a monastic journal either. Once in a year, however, we do allow ourselves a sense of fullness; on Thanksgiving day we sit at tables spread with white linen, adorned with silver, glass, decorated ware; the roasted turkey is flanked with

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parsley, cranberries, celery, squash, potatoes, cabbage, beets, turnips, onions, jellies, pickles, pies of divers sorts and puddings skillfully compounded, nuts, fruits, candies, chocolates, coffees, sherbets and ice creams, till in its physical frame poor human nature can stand no more. All this in a way befits the occasion, as an expression spread out to the eye of the superabundance of our Heavenly Father's gifts to his children.

But the man who got only what some wild birds in their foraging flight dropped within his reach, even he had something for sound thoughts and thanks. He had enough to supply his need which was more than some have; he had a sure sense of God's providing hand in it, which many of us fail to recognize. With him it was plain living and high thinking; frugal fare, but in it was the making of an athlete who could run a foot race front of the galloping horses of the king twenty-seven miles on a stretch from Carmel to the Jezreel gate.

There's something to be learned and not a little to be thankful for at the point where life is reduced to its lowest denominator. About all our New England fathers had or asked for, was a patch of ground to cultivate, a place for a log hut and a meeting house. I was thinking just now of the patch of ground as about the lowest level of the ordinary—too ordinary for notice except that it is dusty in a dry time, dirty and sticky in the wet. But if we get our sentiment of thanks down to the roots of things, that you see brings us to the ground floor. This homely stuff that we think of as common dirt is real estate, the foundation stuff that furnishes all our Thanksgiving dinners, our flowers and fruits, our porcelain cups,

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material for the garments we put on, lumber for the houses we live in. There's healing and disinfecting virtue in it; the smell of its upturned turf is wholesome, a better carpet for children than three-ply or Brussels; into its dark bosom it takes all sorts of noxious things and turns their filth or poison into food for flowers. Shall I shake off the dust of my feet for a testimony against it? No, I shall magnify its homeliness in verse that is fittingly homely.

"My back-yard garden looks inert,
There may be places brighter;
But still its strong dynamic dirt
Is powerful as nitre.

The long result of cosmic toil
Thro nature's patient stages,
Has concentrated in its soil
The potency of ages.

The lime from some old saurian's bones
Now feeds the young tomatoes;
The dust of old volcanic stones
Makes rich the new potatoes.

To light this ground with blossom smiles,
To make the beans grow higher,
The sun thro ninety million miles
Sends down his shafts of fire."

One bean on the way to the bean-pot begins to be interesting when I consider that heaven and earth and starry space and cosmic force and all uncounted ages have gone into the making of that same bean. Perhaps this is why the bean is much accounted of in the metropolis of New England?

Speaking of foods, also, what is it that everywhere and always has gotten to itself the designation of staff of life? Plain bread. This is good and thankworthy.

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This is the principal thing. No mention shall be made of perpetual pie. Thanksgiving every day of the year is for the simpler furnishments of the table. I know a New England town where for many years they lived on corn and bean porridge and potatoes and barley broth, and were sturdy and clear-headed and contented and thrifty, and very thankful. No need of soda mints nor dyspeptic tablets. Most of us would put up with a little more variety, but we never shall outgrow the demand for a good light loaf of bread, or any like sort of plain and wholesome food, skill in the compounding of which, I have said, and say again, is in the front rank of feminine accomplishments.

Shortly before Mrs. Garfield was, with her husband called to the White House, she wrote him during his absence: "It came to me this morning while I was making bread—why not consider this a very pleasant occupation and make it so by making perfect bread. After that the very sunshine seemed flowing down thro my spirit into the loaves, and now my table has better bread than ever before; the truth, old as creation, is becoming fully mine, that I need not be the slave of toil, but its regal master. You have been king of your work so long that maybe you will laugh at me, but I shall not be disconcerted even by your merriment." Garfield's merriment, if any, was, I'm sure, of a thankful sort; good bread, good sense, good humor, good living; of a truth these are good and thankworthy. A few picked men like Garfield will be kings of their work up at the front, and perhaps be shot for it; but ten thousand home-keeping women and men may have a song of thanksgiving for sunshine flowing thro their thoughts upon their everyday tasks.

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Or if sunshine won't shine you'll be thankful for the challenge to something that must be done whether you like it or not.

Thank God every morning when you get up, said Charles Kingsley, that you are forced to do something and to do your very best, for that will breed in you self-control, diligence, content, strength of will and a hundred virtues.

"Do the work that's nearest, tho it's dull at whiles;
Helping when you meet them, lame dogs over stiles."

We had better include in our thanksgiving list the satisfactions we've gotten from opportunities for helping people, from skill in accomplishing something —as getting a hard lesson, doing a first-rate job of joiner work or machinery, fitting over an old garment to be as good as new almost; balancing intricate accounts, keeping things up in the house; doing the plain things that make up four-fifths of life, and doing them as if we were trained artists.

And indeed it takes more of an artist maybe to do a thing or make a thing than we thought. Here's this one-wheeled affair that I use for trundling dirt around in; it is so handy I feel like taking off my hat to the inventor of it. And so, off goes my hat to Leonardo da Vinci, for the same hand that painted The Last Supper made the first wheelbarrow, so I have read. And that homely little cart is likely to keep right on trundling along till the end of time, facilitating the doing of chores around the yard and garden.

We're finding that star-eyed science belongs to common life; not only interpreting laws of planets and of nations, but dictating the shape of farming tools,

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and the mixing of dough in the pantry. The clumsiest farmer in the land plows his field in smooth furrows because Thomas Jefferson found out the exact relation between the cutting wedge and the lifting wedge. If it required brains to draft the Declaration of Independence it took some of the same to draw the model of a plow. It is interesting to think of great nation-builders like Jefferson and Washington bestowing close thought on common affairs, getting so much enjoyment on their farms, improving plows, cosseting sheep and cattle, and breaking colts.

Along levels that anybody can reach lies the bulk of happiness everywhere. Thanksgiving, as all know very well, may be a brighter day in the farmer's unpainted kitchen or the modest village cottage than in a million dollar house. Its infancy indeed was in the log cabin and happily it hasn't yet outgrown its adaptability to anybody anywhere. As much was gotten out of the old time blind man's buff or who's got the button, as out of any paraphernalia for games ever invented. What more did any youngster need in times within my remembrance than a chance in the pasture after berries or butternuts, a box trap for catching relays of squirrels for his cage, an old barrel stave with hammer and some eight-penny nails for constructing a skooter—except perhaps the incomparable luxury of a pair of skates. At the south end of the ground covered by this church and Academy, I have seen girls who are grave matrons now, chasing each other gleefully at the primitive game of tag and doubtless they would like to do it again. At the north end unsuspected candidates for the bench and pulpit were having their leap frog and three-year-old-

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cat with as much relish as if they were a team of today on the way to university honors.

I was interested in this that was told me about a piece of string. There was a toy chariot displayed among Christmas goods. It went by springs, when it started the driver cracked his whip and the four folks inside twisted their necks to see what was going on. A boy was sure that if he could have that chariot he would be supremely happy, and never need anything else as long as he lived. When the time came for Santa Claus to be haunting the chimney flue, a mysterious parcel was delivered for this boy. Off went the long, stout string that tied it together and out came the coveted chariot. A wise mother picked up the string and put it in the work basket. Some weeks after, the proprietor of the vehicle was asking for something to play with. "Why, where's your chariot?" "O, that old thing is no good! it's got out of fix, and I'm tired of it anyway!" That evening the string was fished out from the work basket. A skillful mother's hand taught the young chariot-man plenty of interesting performances with that string; cat's cradle, triangles, squares, parallelograms, various sorts of knots and puzzles and games, insomuch that the best fun of that winter's evenings was had with this cast-off piece of pack-thread. Most important of all was the discovery that an old string might provide more enjoyment than a gilded chariot with prancing horses.

Now I submit it to your own experience if, early or late, you have not found this to be a true story, one to be thankful for. In the distribution of the world's prizes, like those of Santa Claus, it is not everyone that can have a chariot or even a one-horse team;

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but everybody may find satisfactions good and thankworthy in the pack-thread elements of life—in the endless string of duties, homely but interesting because of the chance they give for doing things as they ought to be done—in the cord of mutual dependence that binds all the wide world's industries into one—in the multitudinous threads of personal interest that turn the largest part of the day's work into ministries of affection.

We need to keep ourselves in continuous training towards appreciative moods. To a person who was likely to feel exiled out on the farm, Horace Bushnell wrote, "the very poverty of your sights and conditions will yield up something interesting if you insist on it; look at the pigs' tails spiraling in the curve always one way; one more evidence of the uniformity of law, or if they have been cut off, note how the lines of beauty once gone can never be restored." This delicious bit of appreciation was written some while before the popular wave of nature study had set in, tho even then we had heard one say as he went along peering into things:

> "Let me go where'er I will
> I hear a sky-born music still;
> It is not only in the bird,
> Nor in the song of woman heard,
> But in the darkest, meanest things
> There alway, alway something sings."

This of course presupposes the hearing ear, mindful to find music in the mud and scum of things, and occasion for thanks in the ordinary. I wonder if any of you noticed in one of our periodicals recently this remark, made, said the writer, by a sweet woman of

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many sorrows: "Every night when I say my prayers I thank my Heavenly Father that I can read books, and that I have a sense of humor."

And did that moreover, prompt you on the spot to thank God for any two ordinary things on your part; as that you can see the face of the friend you're talking with, or that you can snuff the fragrance of a rose; that you can hear bird songs old as the world and sweet as Eden, or the home-sounding crow of the rooster; that you hear the merry laugh of the children, the call of Sabbath bells and the strains of some plaintive Balerma or Naomi waking in your soul holy memories of long ago? Most of these everyday things that contribute to the scenery and variety of life have been worn down into such commonness that unless an accident shuts them off a while, we hardly think of them at all.

It is only as we lay hold of our thought and bend it down to consider and be thankful, that we get any conception of the kind and homely offices performed for us by such modest little contrivances as a drum in the ear, a nerve point in the nose, a small round doorway in the eye; also a thinking apparatus that does not wear out, nor veer off its delicate pivots, notwithstanding it is worked so hard, charged with so many responsibilities year after year, but on the whole increases in power and mastery. Bless the Lord O my soul, for level head and sound mind.

Now I will set it down as one indication of sane and level mind in us today that we take account of the ordinary, and do not let ourselves be run away with by the smartness of the times we live in. Admitting that physical powers have been multiplied by an

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unknown quantity, it is fair to ask, as Dr. Van Dyke did a while ago, whether or not moral powers have had their square root extracted. As we look out, the achievements of the century tower and glitter before us with a fascination to which we promptly yield, whether we've been to the great expositions or not. Always in all this there's a main question to raise, viz: is the world as much better relatively as it is brighter? Life is swifter, brighter, easier. Is it by that much sweeter and purer? Does wisdom keep pace with wealth? Men are smart in business, in politics. Are they so much the more sincere in private life and in the great corporation? The new is extraordinary. Does that mean that we're now done with the ordinary, the simple, the plain, the old-fashioned?

A moment's thought will show us that back of all the new that quickens the pace of living, are the plain features that never change, the simplicities that always have given comfort and sweetness and dignity and power to life, and always will. When we get at real life we find it just the same in this vivid, electric age that it always was—as the lightnings that Franklin coaxed down on his kite string—another interesting old string—are the same lightnings that played around the bald head of Sinai.

If you want a good garden in your life you have the same formula Adam had—dress it and keep it and let alone what's forbidden. Some very substantial things hold over from century to century. Time cannot make all ancient good uncouth. There will always be a grain market. Plain living will continue to be the best. Simple things still have their charm. The old stiff-backed chairs are back again already.

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Thanks for the Ordinary

No new century novelties in music will ever steal away the spells from Auld Lang Syne, The Old Arm Chair, The Swanee River, Home Sweet Home. The brook will run along its curving, babbling way and it shall be that thou shalt loiter there and play with its bubbles and rest in the rippling music of its flow.

New things will be good, but not good enough to order out the old. Art will be running out after varying styles of expression, but the Greek line will remain; the humble cottage will continue picturesque on canvass; the richest drawing-room will find place for a picture of two toil-worn potato diggers at the ringing of the Angelus. The family cat will continue to contribute an air of comfort to the hearth or easy chair. Books that have moved the heart once will do it again. The new literature will not discover any blazoned cathedral glass that shall render more to the world's dutiful home life than a modest twelve-inch window in Thrums where the patient mother sits looking out from her dreary surroundings. "The Lord has gi'en this hoose ane sae mony blessin's 'at to pray for mair looks like no bien thankfu' for what we've got."

> "Plowmen, shepherds, have I found,
> And more than once, and still shall find,
> Sons of God and kings of men
> In utter nobleness of mind."

Thank God for nobility in the ordinary. The best types of twentieth century life will for the most part rise from the ordinary level as always before. They will not invariably take first-class passage, but they will perpetuate the qualities that have led the progress of the world. The Atlantic greyhounds with intellect,

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culture, wealth and power gracing their splendid saloons, will bring across the sea no manhood more stalwart, no womanhood more enduring and brave, than was packed into the stuffy cabin of the Mayflower.

Thank God once for the new science that is making a new earth, once for inventions that brighten and ease man's life—thank God three times over for the spirit of the Pilgrims, for conscience, reverence for law, for loyalty to God, for the homely art of sticking to duty. Thank God for these old-fashioned ideas that are making present day heroism every hour of the twenty-our. Thank God for the engineer at his perilous post; the hospital nurse amongst loathsome diseases; the house mother singing tho bound in poverty and toil; the hard working farmer and miner getting food and fuel for everybody; the missionary, disinterested and consecrated, not abandoning her little flock till the red knife of fanaticism is driven into her heart.

I will be thankful for every new application of truths old as the world, ordinary as the coat I put on. The pole star is still a safe guide. The twenty-third Psalm still lights a dark way. Bible scenery may be old and homely, but it is clear-cut to view and to everyday experience, as the sharpest picture of the new calcium light. Men are still walking with God, or wrestling with their nobler impulse in some defile of Jabbok till break of day. Maidens accompany the bride to the wedding as they did the gracious and beautiful Abigail. Young men smite their lion or bear and even go for the big Philistine that defies the God of hosts. The Rechabite family is not extinct by any means in Vermont, nor the kindly ministries that

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replenish the widow's meal. There's still virtue in Isaiah's poultice for a boil. And the old hen is anxiously clucking for her chickens, as when the Saviour saw her in Galilee. The busy housewife is not yet done sweeping the floors or stirring in the yeast, and, happily, the prodigal beginning to be in want, feels the same old impulse stirring in his heart to say, I will arise and go unto my father.

The old truths are not outworn nor outgrown, not even is the nap worn off. Places hallowed by simple stories of old are right around us like the hills we look on every day, "and faith has still its Olivet and love its Galilee." The foremost man of the twentieth century will need the same Saviour that the leper came to long ago. Abram did not hold the telephone to his ear at Mamre; all the same he got messages across the wireless sky that you and I will want to hear with the dawning century. Thank God for new heavens and the new earth! Thank God with warmer thanks for the old, old story; for the homely manger and the carpenter's shop; for the plain ways our Saviour trod; for his example of the dignity and power of life in the ordinary,

> "For the common deeds of the common day
> Are ringing bells in the far away."

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Two Wagons, Four Oxen

Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service.

And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service.

But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none.

Numbers, vii: 7-9.

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Two Wagons, Four Oxen

THOSE wagons were not for speed nor for beauty. They were low wooden carts mounted on wheels hewn from a thick plank. But like some other old fashioned things they are interesting. A quaint dignity seems to invest them, as leaders of a long procession of vehicles used in the service of religion. They were a part of the religious establishment organized at Sinai, forerunners, we might say, of the modern gospel wagon and missionary ships.

Supplementary to materials given for the construction and furnishments of the tabernacle, came a call for transportation service. So one man subscribed an ox, another a wagon, others did the same till twelve oxen and six wagons had been offered. These were then detailed to the Levite families of Gershon and Merari. It was their business when the tabernacle was taken down, to load it on to these carts and drive the oxen along.

As I look at it, the slow creeping of those ox teams across the desert is something more than merely getting from one place to another. It is the onward movement of the institutions of religion. I will set a

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few stakes down by the way, marking points to be noted.

First—Two wagons, four oxen. This means a move. No sooner are they well settled here at Sinai than wagons are brought up, for they must go. Not even here at the mount of God can they stay any long while. Out yonder is a bigger world, a larger plan of life, and now the teams are ready to start.

Stagnation must be broken up whether by an ox cart or an express train. The very life of life is to keep stirring. There are little trips to be made every day for the many things that must be done. We have to go out beyond ourselves into the larger life of other people. Wheels mean progress, even for those who are shut in. They bring daily mail and traffic to us and require that we in our little corner of the world keep abreast of all advancing thought and generous endeavor.

Wheels show progress. The uncouth cart of Midian should be seen alongside the spider-web wheels of the bicycle or the drivers of the hundred and fifty ton locomotive. What would this make us think of? Not simply rapid transit, but the forward push of man's intelligence. Front of every wheel on the road or in the factory is the mind that demanded it, created it, adjusted it and made it go. Not only do wheels in their turning get us over the ground, they show us the energetic ongoings of man's mind, the progress of the world. But now another matter comes to the front—a very essential one as reported by those desert carts.

Second—Two wagons, four oxen. This means more than a move, it signifies that when the people go, the tabernacle must go too. The progress of the world

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includes and depends on the institutions of religion. Some seem never to have thought of this.

Just at the time that Libni, the Gershonite, is getting his oxen into position west of the tabernacle court, I can see how Kenaz brother-in-law of Jethro might be coming along. He is an old Sheikh of Midian, he knows the desert well, how to live in it and how to go thro it. Leaning on his lance while they are loading up the wagons, he breaks out with a deliverance of his opinion—what fools, O Beni-Yisrael, to load yourselves with all this useless stuff! in the desert it needs only the roof of the sky to make a sacred place, and why lug around that great brazen altar when at every camping ye shall find stones to build altars withal!

And reasoning as men do, the Sheikh to the desert born, is quite right. Over those plains, or any where else in fact, one wants to carry as little as possible. Luggage was long ago correctly called impedimenta. Loyalty to your religion does not require you to carry the big family Bible on a journey; you will take a testament and some few needful things only that will pack snugly in small compass. But these Iraelites are loading themselves with a costly and burdensome structure requiring for transportation six wagons and twelve oxen.

This, the old Sheikh thinks is a queer way; but there is one item in the case which he does not take into account. These Beni-Yisrael are not down here in the desert by any arrangement of theirs, nor are they planning to make any move by advice of their neighbors. The God who strangely got them down here, ordered this tabernacle built before he would lead them one step up toward the land he sware unto their

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fathers. And over every inch of the long way he requires them to carry all its parts and belongings, from the heavy brass altar to the little pins and snuff-dishes. Only by loading themselves with all this will they ever get where they want to be. When the Sheikh of Midian understands this, the whole thing will look differently to him.

How is it with us today. Here we are in the midst of the journey of our life. Not by any plan of ours did we start on this trip, nor do we have the management of it ourselves, nor can we guess the right way out except as we carry along with us the illuminations and ordinances of religion. It needs these to make a right way for ourselves and for our little ones and for the progress of the world.

A nimble man of affairs comes along and he says, why so much religious observance? Why so much money put into church buildings and their running gear? One can make a living in this world and come out all right without taking on all these burdens and formalities.

Can he, indeed? He does not know what he is talking about. It isn't a mere matter of making a living or of getting thro somehow. It is the great question of the meaning of life—the dignity of it, the discipline of it, the destiny of it. It needs a Bible to reveal this, a Sabbath bell to call attention to it, public observances to give expression to it. Therefore the villages we live in, like the camp of Israel of old are built around the sanctuary dedicated to worship, hallowed with memories of the altar and of the cross. Without this our pilgrimage is aimless and the progress of the world is at a standstill.

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Wagons and oxen or horses are as needful now as in the days of Libni the Gershonite, for drawing stone and lumber to build a church withal, and for hauling fuel to warm it in the winter. The sanctuary, now as then, is a visible sign that God dwells with men to sanctify their life and to bring them by way of it to a land of promise.

Another thing. About all that the wild tribes and Sheikhs ever knew of the true God was learned from this peculiar people, who went thro their borders carrying the altar and a tabernacle. Some light and truth come to all men, but intelligent acquaintance with God and with the great facts of sin and salvation never has been and never will be found apart from the church of Christ. This is God's institution appointed to carry thro this world the visible insignia of religion, and to show in every day life its practical worth to men.

To get the imprint of divine ideas firmly put on business, literature, politics, home life, pleasure or toil; to brighten men's hearts with holy hopes and aims, with sweet affections, sympathies and golden rules—this is what the church, the body of Christ is in this world for. Her temples adorn the land as they contribute to ennoble its life. Suppose the sky-pointing spires were shorn from our hills and vales. Not only would one fine charm of the scenery melt away, but common life would revert to paganism. Apart from the sanctuary there is no good land to be arrived at, nor any land kept good and wholesome, free from the blight of godless living.

Third—Two wagons, four oxen. This means distribution of duty, and according to ability. For

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in the next clause we come to four wagons and eight oxen. There's a reason for this. The curtains, cords, rings, ram's skins dyed red, all lighter stuffs, are in charge of the Gershonites with two wagons and four oxen. But the Merarites have to handle the boards, pillars, bars, silver sockets, heavy things, so for transporting these they have four wagons and eight oxen, twice as many. And besides, when it comes to the census it appears there are five hundred and seventy more Merarites to begin with. So we see the distribution of men, wagons, oxen, exactly fits the service required. This of course is not surprising; it is the familiar idea of division of labor for getting things done the best way.

In this arrangement there's also lodged a principle of religion which God is very particular about. If one family has more wagons or oxen than another, more and heavier work is by that much expected. Here is a man who has twice the strength or ability or property of his next neighbor. What does that mean? Twice as good a time in life? Certainly, if he discover what that is, namely, the doubling of his responsibility, the privilege of giving twice as strong a lift in bringing the world up. This is what it means, tho some translate it otherwise.

There are well-furnished and capable Merarites who instead of lifting on the timbers, slip over among the Gershonites and lend a hand on the curtains. It makes them feel good to be doing something in aid of religion. One of them said so, the other day, over in New Hampshire; he told the church treasurer it did him good to pay his one dollar a year. Perhaps it did him good to know that half a dozen Gershonites were

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standing in every year for the other forty-nine that reasonably belonged to him. However that be, he soon left a pile of money to be quarreled over by a pack of greedy relatives.

Money, skill, talent, education, strength, facility, position, are very convenient items to have; we would like some ourselves; at the same time they bring serious obligations. One cannot turn his gifts or his holdings in upon his own center without loading himself to death, killing the best elements of manhood and missing his chance for distributing good. There have been those who reckoned it a smart thing to grab and hold on to all that could be gotten, to go rough shod over all considerations of courtesy or generosity, to live indulgently and stingily, shirking their share of the service of the world.

Now there's an old rule that says where much is given much will be required. The equity and felicity of this is transparently clear. Moreover God will abide by it, and at the judgment he will reckon with every man according to that which he received. The Merarite with his eight oxen cannot be let off with the light load of the four-ox Gershonite.

But what about the Kohathites? To them, it says, he gave none, not one ox. Having neither wagon nor ox what can the Kohath man do? Now that is easily answered. Some things are too delicate or sacred to be loaded on to wagons. It was not allowed that the ark of God could be carried on a cart. That and the seven-branched candlestick and the little gold altar of incense and the choice vessels of the holy place were given to the Kohathites to be carried by hand. The fitness of this arrangement any

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one may appreciate. I saw heavy teams hauling up the stone and timbers that went into this church building, but the pulpit Bible, the silver cups and tankards of the communion service were brought in by hand and reverently put in place.

Any day we may see what nice adaptation God makes of capabilities and duties. What one shall do appears in what one has to do with. I have known of one sending two horses and a carriage to take an invalid out into the summer air. And I have known one who didn't own so much as one horse to come into a chamber and with two hands lift a sick man. Which of these two did the best? Each did what each could; nothing could be better.

Not one ox had the Kohathite, but a hand, or two hands, as you and I have. I would rather have one hand than a dozen oxen. It is never far one has to go to find it and nothing could be handier for doing things. This old ox story and every word of our holy Bible was written by hand—not for pay, either. All the fine and practical arts that uplift or adorn man's life are of the hand, and so is the supreme art that Jesus taught, of doing good. For the most delicate ministries of Christian love there is no other tool. Better than plenty of good talk is a firm hand stroking the palm of a poor sick body. It needs only an ordinary hand for a good share of all the Christian service that is to be distributed, such as giving a hearty handshake or writing kind letters, relieving pain, doing a good turn at the neighbor's, making gifts, helping children, laying the dead to rest. The Kohathite has the happiness of lending a hand and being universally

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useful. There is never a time nor place where a handy person isn't wanted.

Fourth—Two wagons, four oxen. This brings in a discipline of doing things with rigorous exactness. The rules are strict, no variation is allowed, no opportunity for individual initiative nor for improved methods.

That tabernacle must be taken down, packed, loaded on to wagons, transported, lifted off, put together, set up again, according to a rigid method that will be in force for some forty years. Any variation of this order will be fatal. Disciplines of this sort are more familiar now than they were then. Military skill and naval power are built on discipline. The traveling circus has one good show, namely, skilled method in taking down, loading and transporting its unwieldy paraphernalia. The pattern of which, I incline to think, may be found in an old book containing some reputed mistakes of Moses.

Now the proposition in Moses' time was not simply to get the people thro the wilderness, but to get them soundly disciplined on the way. Consequently things were laid out very minutely and exactly, and the specifications must be followed to the last particular. Thus the driving up of a Gershonite ox and the folding of a badger's skin, whether badger or porpoise, came to be work with religious precision and purpose in it, as genuine to a degree as tho it were priestly ministration at the altar.

Take it now in our own case. What is the main thing? simply to get thro all right? No. But to secure as we go along, the disciplines of life by all the miscellaneous occupations we are in. God has

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measured out six-sevenths of our time for worldly affairs as we call them; for all our work, as it says in the commandment. By this does he intend to make us six times as worldly as we are religious? Some folks manage to get that result out of it.

But the proposition is, religious discipline by way of every day work. At the fore front of the week God has set his holy Sabbath. The sacred stimulus of that day is to penetrate and hallow the entire miscellany of the other six. All the long while that we are not going to meeting he is training us by the every day routine. Dull and monotonous and uninteresting enough is the inescapable string of small chores, and we think we want no more of that sort. Yet as in those old times of wagons and oxen, so now—we get our training into habits of patience, carefulness, precision, co-operation, a right spirit and an open testimony to him as our Master, this very way. The arrangement could not be improved upon. God has made the daily tasks a necessity of life, we are to make them a necessary item in our religious education. Coming to them with a docile mind we shall get character drill in the process of keeping store, farming land, running machinery and cook stoves, doing school lessons, handling cattle and teams.

Some years ago a lad was sent to the hay field with an ox team. Going thro where the bars were down he geed the cattle too far, struck the off-wheel on the post and brought it down. Did the farmer whose orders he was under, take on about the injury done? On the contrary he set the boy driving back and forth thro that opening till he could take an ox

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team into any field without hitting a post. Keep at it, sir, he said, and don't you stop till you can do it.

What was the main thing in the mind of my sturdy grandsire that day? Was it to save something on fence posts? I may have thought so then, but now I plainly see it was to train the boy. Nothing else but that. Two oxen and a cart, and—at it sir, till you can do it.

At it, we may say, is the order that is on us all, in the midst of our daily tasks. At it, till out of all this homely work we have gained our training of heart as well as of hand. It is in the workshop of common life that we work out our part in salvation. There's only one way of doing anything; our Saviour taught us that way, doing all things to please the Father. This weaves a spiritual quality into the process—all the same whether immediate results suit us or plague us. His tool slipped, says one who was observing a mechanic, and the work was spoiled. Then his face flushed with anger, the old impulse to swear started up, but instead, he firmly bit his lip and began again. That was a spiritual victory won at the bench. And there isn't a day of our lives that does not bring us to some little matter which straightway gets importance as a pivot on which we turn rightly or wrongly.

We ourselves come to be what our average daily work in life makes us. We think we do things and there's an end of it. Not so. These very things as we did them did something in turn for us. They contributed to the making of the man who did them. Did William of Wykeham build this tower of Windsor Castle? Yes. And into it he set the lettering—this made William of Wykeham. The building of it was

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part of the building of the man. It cannot be otherwise. Whatever is done conscientiously with a main purpose of pleasing God is more than so much done. It enters into ourselves, becomes part of our spiritual structure; we take it with us into next year, into next millennium. We carry over into the next world just one finished product of all our days' works here, viz., disposition, ways, methods, habits, motives, character-marks, all of which were acquired while we were about our affairs, not suspecting how they were quietly touching us into shape.

Fifth—Two wagons, four oxen. To get the best out of them, turn them, when occasion calls, to the public service. Even for his own advantage this is the best thing one can do.

How was it with Jobab and his ox? Unless that tabernacle is carried thro all right, he will never see the good land, his children never will. He must hitch his team into the public service, take his share of all common obligations, or else he will miss his chance.

This is about the last thing that some people think of. Their lookout is for a good seat, a comfortable ride. Here is a sleek man of Naphtali coming along. He sees the wagon standing ready to start, and he says—a fine arrangement. I'll just get in. He might get in. How far would he get on toward Canaan's milk and honey? Plenty of people today are taking rides—where to? Not straight up to the gate of the city I fear. Riding along the boulevards of ease or of show, going smoothly or swiftly over any bright way that makes life an entertainment chiefly, cannot bring one out at a desirable terminus.

The one man who did have a chariot ride to

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heaven got it without expecting it. All he planned for was to go footing it up and down the country, doing errands for God—giving some plain talk to a king, or replenishing a poor widow's meal barrel, or walking along with a man till the Lord took him up. Not even by laborious commandment-keeping can we make such upward progress as by quietly helping somebody along. The young lawyer who had kept all the commandments from his youth up had "a well-built turnout. If one could ride to eternal life on any carriage of his own making, here was a passenger. Even the Saviour as he looked found something to admire, but pointed out the defect in the vehicle and the young man alighted and went away sorrowful." What was the matter? This was the matter—he had no heart for the suffering world; his riches all went in upon himself and choked him.

On the other hand we have the story of a Samaritan who set the battered Jew on his own beast while he trudged along on foot. This might pass for a bit of entertaining fiction except that fact was back of it. That very day the wheels of the universe waited the bidding of a Man who preferred to go about on foot distributing sympathy and lending a hand. And so deeply went the gentle push of his example, that now, after long while, good Samaritanism is not only good form, it is the veritable autograph of the church and sign of the new earth that is to be.

Two wagons, four oxen. Whether it be an ox or an ass, an old cart or a surrey, millions of money or only a pair of hands, the public service needs the one full share each one can render and only so will

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he get the good of what he has. Orderly society and business prosperity rest on the foundation of sapphires that Christ laid. Religion puts property values up. It is money in my pocket, said a man, to pay for church work in my town. Truly so—not surpassingly heroic as a motive, but the bent of some minds is such that it fits their case. The ox of Reuben and the wagon of Dan will go below par if not put to their share of the service of religion. So with everything else.

I like the straight logic of the Basuto lad who drove the missionary team. Sir, said he, those oxen are the Lord's, it's my work to keep them fat and strong to pull the gospel wagon to Bani-ai-land. That's why I need a warmer coat for these cold nights and days.

Sure enough. Even the coat I put on is something more than an up-to-date garment, it is part of my furnishment for the daily service of life. It does more than fit well or make me comfortable; it dresses me to be abroad with some everyday good for somebody.

Nothing gets its full value till it is coupled to a larger service than any one life compasses. Practical generosity makes values. Even a child can learn this. I saw a little boy holding out his stick of candy for another boy to have a bite at; he might have swallowed all that sweetness off by himself in a corner; as it was, he quite unconsciously three-folded its value by making two boys happy also the man who was looking on. He was on the way to learn the meaning of a familiar couplet,

> "Who bestows himself with his alms feeds three,
> Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

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No sooner were the five loaves broken and distributed than their value advanced several hundred per cent. I wonder if the villager in Bethphage ever suspected what a valuable colt he owned? Not till he loaned it to One who had need of him and was worthy of the best; from that time on this little donkey has lived in the affections of man, and figured quaintly in the world's immortal pictures.

Many generations have passed and the ways of traffic and transportation have changed. In these days we are waited on by the parlor car and the lightning express. But those ungainly carts of the desert and the slow-going oxen that pulled them along, comfortably chewing their cuds between whiles, may be said to be still in the service—leading our thoughts along homely paths of truth, figuring to us the imperishable value of things, of lives, dedicated to the will of God and to the good of men.

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Transformation

Transfigured.
Matthew, xvii: 2.
Transformed.
Romans, xii: 2.
Changed.
I. Corinthians, iii: 18.

1879.

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Transformation

OUR theme is in one word. Not a compact Bible monosyllable this time, but a large word of large unfoldings; a word that may be said to hold in itself the spiritual progress of the world.

Singularly this word found its way only three times into the original, and then came over into our English Bible as three different words. So that, Jesus was said to be transfigured, the disciple transformed, the disciple also changed spiritually. And these three words, originally one—metamorphoo—marked a transfiguration of body, mind, spirit; interesting as a theme, supremely important as a fact.

Now in our thought this great word transfiguration stands for some superb mystery, like that on the high mountain. But in reality, the thing itself, in all manner of ways, is common enough. It is an everyday occurrence like the sunlight. Like sunlight too, none the less wonderful for being common. What is this flushing of the hemisphere with out-streaming light of the morning but the transfiguration of the face of the earth? One wouldn't guess that the ground, gloomy, expressionless, uninteresting at midnight, could ever take on such illuminations of variegated beauty as play upon its features at the touch of the rising sun.

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More surprising still are some changing aspects of things familiar to us in daily life, but not always set out before us in their full meaning. Take any one thing. Here for example is a bucket of water. The horse has drunk what he wants of it, now the driver rinses off the wagon wheels with the rest of it, and that's the end of a bucket of water. The end? No, not of that, nor of any pail of suds or slops running off in the sewer. This is water. Before God makes an end of it he will show us what water is.

So he strains it thro his earth-filter, takes it by subterranean runaways to an outlet, bubbles it over in a brook, sends it rippling down into a pond, lets his evaporating machinery work upon it, and then begins to show us what he can make out of a pail of water more or less.

He whirls it in scuds of white mist across the blue. He rolls it up in thunder clouds black as night. He flushes it with seven colors bent to his mighty bow. He turns it into plunging Niagaras, into Yosemite bridal veils. He uses it for diamonding lawns, for sharpening icicles, for painting ferns on window glass. He packs it into sapphire blocks that men cut and put into our refrigerators, or hangs it on the shoulders of the hills in folds of drapery whiter than any fuller on earth can whiten. In the morning he sends it down for a shower bath, at evening he piles it in bulk on the west horizon and commands the sun at his going down to look thro it—so that for a moment we may see his golden chariot, the rings and wings and cherubim of his pavilion, the vanishing splendors of the New Jerusalem.

This is water. We use it or see it every day, at the

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morning bath or the muddy street crossings; but just what it is we have not seen in fact till we have traced it thro the cycles of its beautiful transformations. Pure water, however, as in a tumbler on a hot day, might seem to us capable of large possibilities. But not so, we would say, with other, cheaper things.

Well, then, we will look at something as cheap and unlike water as common dirt. Take a handful of dirt from the edge of the roadway or garden. Mr. Ruskin has told us in his chapter on the Law of Help how to watch it and see what it will do, conditions favoring. Part of it grows white and smooth and comes out a porcelain cup. Part of it sets into firm stone that takes only the blue ray, and that is a sapphire. Part of it whitens and hardens into parallel layers that flash out red, purple, green and blue; that's an opal. Another part, blackest and sootiest of all, comes out by some magic of nature's laboratory a diamond. So instead of a lump of dirt you have a porcelain cup with sapphires, opals and diamonds.

Transformation indeed. Could anything on this round earth be more of a marvel? Yes, very much more. For what are we ourselves in bodily frame but dust lifted up from the ground, transfigured into fine and intricate machinery of life? Look at this earthy material, the dust that we shake off our feet—look at it again after God has cleansed it, transformed it, built it into a house for the spirit to live in. Thus we see what common dust can come to. But even this is not the limit of its possibility.

Out yonder above Cæsarea Philippi what is that shining figure on the mountain—exceeding white and glistering? That, too, is common dust of the

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ground, transfigured, sublimated. It is the body of a Galilean made luminous by some chemistry not known in our laboratories. It is a spectacle seen for one rare moment, a hint, perhaps, of what this earthy might readily become if under full dominion of the spiritual.

And this is the outlook of our theme toward which we have been creeping up. If, starting in the very dust of the earth, we find things capable of such transforming, perhaps we may look for like surprising changes in the sphere of spirit—transforming thought, affection, will, character.

That is just what we do find. There is a man going up a tree in Jericho. He is fraudulent, tricky, stingy. When he comes down he is restoring fourfold and giving half his property to the poor. There again is a man on horseback. Look at him galloping thro Jerusalem gate raging and blaspheming. Look at him again, led like a child by the hand thro Damascus gate. Is he the same man? One wouldn't think so. The change from Saul to Paul was more surprising than the transfiguration on the mountain. That might perhaps have been expected. This never. Yet it did come to pass and has ever since.

You may not need to go far any day to find it. Not long ago it happened again in one of our brisk New England towns where there's plenty of soot and dirt on the streets, plenty in common life too, without suspicion of diamonds hid therein. In that city was a lawyer, a man of position, of affairs, of brains; intellectually acute, openly a scoffer; a man who had it out distinctly that he could live without religion, and when the end was arrived at he should die game.

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But a thing happened. There came over him a change, a spirit of docility, the simple religious faith of a child. The Christian life which formerly he had scouted became the supreme reality of his life, and all who saw him saw a man as it were transfigured, who with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord was himself transformed into the same image.

Well, this was a man of intelligence, perhaps it wouldn't be the same with one of the baser sort. Yes it would. Here is a child born into the third generation of a family of criminals; five times in jail up to the age of twelve; thirty-three years serving terms in prison, in Australia, Gibraltar, Old Bailey, Van Dieman's Land, Moyamensing, South Boston, Montreal, Sing Sing; fifty-three years a criminal outlaw till one dark night he drifted into Jerry McAuley's mission. That night came a change. Michael Dunn went out to a new life. He was sober, worshipful, manly, earnest-spirited; a messenger of hope to profane, drunken, criminal men; he founded industrial homes in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Brooklyn, Philadelphia; he lived for twenty years bringing sympathy and help to the worst people he could find, and all who looked on him saw what used to be a gloomy visage transfigured as with something from another world.

I think we shall agree that transformations like these are worth some close attention if only as phenomena to be scientifically analyzed and labeled. But a hundred-fold more as commanding events full of blessing for men.

Not rare events either; these are but two out of twenty thousand, of all ages, all sorts, among all

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races, in every zone or continent. Sometimes a dramatic experience—Augustine, Bunyan, John Newton, Gough, and Jerry McAuley. More often a change from outward correctness to spirituality of heart; transformation from a skeptical, self-centered, sour, cold or wilful habit of mind, to humility, faith, sincerity, reverence, gentleness, sympathy.

Transformation like this can be wrought only by the Spirit from whom man's spirit came. It is the inmost response of soul to soul, of a disobedient son to a Father's love. Its full beauty may not appear at first glance. It needs a discerning eye to see every precious thing. You were not looking for a diamond in that pinch of dust, for a jewel soul in that plain man or woman passing by. In a wild Arabian wady I came upon a rounded pebble, it looked like any common stone on the Danville road, but the stroke of a hammer disclosed inside a pocket of a thousand crystals. That was an interesting find, but nearer home I have found under more than one plain exterior, qualities of soul which God's grace had polished and perfected wholly apart from the busy or cultured or fashionable world.

The work of the Spirit in the new creation is not without surprises and picturesque effects as in the first creation reported to us in Genesis. There was the earth, waste and void, unsightly, darkness on the deep. But over it all the Spirit of God was brooding. Then out of that weltering mass came order, life, growth, summer bloom; the primeval swamp is transformed into a garden. Tragedy and death coming in did not stop the process. Freshness, fragrance, loveliness are perenially unfolding above all

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the ravage of death. By the conflicts of nature-forces mingling with her nicely balanced harmonies, the Spirit of God is incessantly at work transforming things to things of finer grain and higher grade; dirt to diamonds, dry seeds to flowers, worms that crawl on sixteen legs to butterflies; wilderness and solitary places to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

And this transforming of barren places spoken of by Esaias the prophet—what is it but a sign of the Spirit of love descending upon the wastes of man's life, brooding the troubled deep of human sin and wreck, to bring out therefrom a new creation of spiritual beauty.

This, we say, is a world of sin. True, but more truly it is a world in moral chaos on the way to its transformation. The problem of the world is the making of man, and as to that

> "Man as yet is being made, and e'er the crowning age of ages
> Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?"

It staggers us to think that the holy Creator ever let sin in; the depths of that mystery are below all sounding lines of ours. But over against that unfathomable deep we are to fix our eye on one shining truth towering high in the distance—the redeeming purpose of Jehovah. This changes the whole aspect of things. Sin is still here, in the foreground, as dreadful as ever; but, farther on, redemption rising over the long perspective to the sky-line of God's eternal purpose. And we may most truly say that in the far view this is not so characteristically and impressively a world of sin as of redemption—of transformation from sin to God. To this all signs

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have pointed, ever since the formless void felt the first faint thrills of light and coming life.

When God would choose a place to put his name there for some characteristic display, what place should it be? O, we might have answered easily enough—some fair spot unstained by man's iniquities or falsities, a virgin slope where lily-bells are swinging incense and the sky lark leads the chorus. Instead of which God selected the crag of Jebus, a fortress of the Canaanites red with blood of many fights, polluted with idolatries, a high seat of false gods. He chose that place that he might transform it from a fort to a sanctuary, from Baal abominations to Zion the place of his solemnities.

This is God's way, the order of his redeeming and transforming grace. Verily not of angels doth he take hold for this, but of the seed of Abraham. He maketh choice of man's sinful heart to put his name there. He lifts the poor from the dust, the needy from the dunghill that he may set them among princes. Out of the clay of this corrupt world he gets crown jewels. A sinner converted is a sample of what grace can do.

I should like to know what the enemies of religion would say about John C.'s conversion—said Daniel Webster: "In profanity and impiety he was the wickedest man in the neighborhood. Yet here he is today a penitent, humble, trustful believer. Whatever people may say, nobody can convince me that anything short of the grace of Almighty God could make such a change as I with my own eyes have seen in the life of that man."

Mr. Webster's explanation was ample for all facts in the case. The change was great but not too great

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for the transforming touch of God. The evolutionary hypothesis had not then come into vogue, but even if it had, that virile thinker would be saying that nothing short of the grace of Almighty God could work the change that he had seen.

Evolution is superb, but not soul converting. Profane men, godless nations, were never known to develop up into spiritual mindedness. They must first be transformed by the renewing of their mind. Paul is not a Saul developed to the tenth power. Zion could not have been evolved out of a Jebusite fort. The stone tracery of Salisbury Cathedral spire lifting the symbol of the cross four hundred feet in air, never spired up as a natural efflorescence from the Druid monoliths of Stonehenge.

But when the missionary from Italy or Iona came, and the heart of old Britain began to feel the transforming touch of God, then a new order came in. The weird Druid-chant died away and the solemn Te Deum rolled along the aisles; enlightened and converted England came to the fore front of the world.

We are ready now to consider the part that falls to us personally in the transformations of life. For in the sphere of spiritual effects there is this other limb to the hinge of turning; God's working must be matched by man's consent and co-operation, or the program cannot be carried out. It is a holy partnership. We are appointed to be workers together with God in making this a better world to live in. That appears even on the field of things.

From the first the Creator set the hand and heart of man at work to complete in some details his own work. Transforming the fiery or frozen tracts of

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Chaos and old night into an Eden was his solitary act, but no sooner was the garden laid out than the finishing touches were committed to the man; namely, to dress it, to keep it, to work his will upon it, to sanctify it by obedience and worship.

Look at gardens nearer home than that. This New England that we love—how came it as we see it now? On a time God lifted it out of the brine, ground it under glaciers, overlaid it with gravel and soil, robed it with forests. But the ultimate transformation he reserved for the hand and will of men, after his own heart. He brought the Mayflower pilgrims here. That was the signal for a new order.

Then began the transforming of the wilderness into fruitful fields, villages, gardens, parks; with schools, colleges, libraries; with sweet homes and hallowed sanctuaries, where life is something more than squatting in a wigwam or shooting arrows or scalping men. Man's energies inspired of God have worked these results. The gloomy wilderness is clothed with glories of Lebanon and excellencies of Carmel and Sharon.

In the common things that men do every day we may see a good share of energy going into transformations that adorn and elevate life. Very significant are these transformings of iron into machines, trees into houses and furniture, wool into garments, rags into paper, paper into Bibles, Bibles into life, life into life abundant and everlasting.

I recall a question thrown out by one of the New York papers when Peter Cooper died—of what was Cooper Institute built? Of glue, to be sure. Bones and hoofs were rendered into glue, glue into gold, gold

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into popular instruction, and that into character, culture, ability, life-power. That is the transmutation of glue.

By the skill of man the very refuse of the world is transformed into things nice or useful—street offal into perfume, sewage into market gardens, frowsy rags with scrap iron and slaughter-house filth, into brilliant dyes; the universal nuisance heap of ashes, tin cans, bottles, bones, boots, papers, barrel-hoops, cinders, garbage of every sort, into electric light to lighten the world.

The ultimate significance of such effects seems to me entirely plain. Out of common and even base material wrought upon by man's intelligence, by consecrated will, life is to be lightened and sweetened and beautified. God has ordained that this world shall be wholly transformed by means of the spiritual activities of men and women who have themselves been changed into his likeness. Apparently this is why we are in the world now, to help transform it before being translated out of it. Ye are the light of the world, said our Saviour, and as in the first creation, so now, the dawning of light is the signal for transformations. The gloomiest backgrounds of heathenism are brightened with them.

Lin Kin Shan, the notorious profligate of Hankow becomes teacher in the Christian hospital; old Gwergis the robber chief, traverses the Koordish mountains with Bible instead of dagger and gun; the haughty Brahmin Haripunt is changed into a lowly minister of Jesus; Afrikaner fierce as the Gadarene demoniac grows gentle as a girl; Kapiolani, imperious and passionate, proud daughter of a race of barbarian kings, rules her people twenty years with Christian courtesy and love.

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Lift up thine eyes round about and see—all things are changed. Instead of cannibal ovens the goodly sanctuaries of Jehovah. That hideous stone *Vatu-nin-Bokola*, where heads of men were beaten into jelly to propitiate the demons, is turned into a baptismal font. There are the war spears of Rurutu framed into a pulpit balustrade. The dreaded and devil-haunted island of Aniwa, touched with a mighty spell at the coming of John Paton, is transfigured to a gem of light on the bosom of the southern seas.

Transformations like these are picturesque on the far field, but as character-changes they are essentially identical everywhere. For even under the veneering of a Christian civilization, there is the same old heart of man full of sin and self-will. Tomorrow morning's paper will let us know that this fair land of ours is not yet free of savagery, crime and beastliness. In every New England township we may encounter profanity, falsehood, theft or vice. To meet all this God has set his church in the midst to act as a transforming energy and influence every day of the year. Inspired and empowered by the breath of his Spirit we shall each contribute one personal touch and testimony to shape the public conscience and purify its life; till the all-consuming greed of men shall melt in an atmosphere of generousness, and

> "———all men's good
> Be each man's rule, and universal good
> Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
> And like a lane of beams athwart the sea"

transfiguring the moral landscape.

We may shake our heads and call this quite too ideal for such a world as we are in. But unexpected

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things in that direction have come to pass already since the night that Bethlehem shepherds saw a great light. It is worth while to ask who is at the head of affairs? The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and before he makes an end of it, he will show us what transformations he can bring out. Something of this he signified to the clear-eyed seers who caught visions of a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

We are not to wonder that this takes time; great work always does. Slowly and patiently God worked upon this earthly ball, counting off many millenniums in transforming it from fire-mist to the garden spot of man's joys. Millenniums behind and millenniums to come will be none too many for changing a rabble of degraded humanity into the kingdom of God on earth, where his will is done as it is in heaven.

A single life turning on the pivot of a changed will may seem quite suddenly transformed. But the unwieldy bulk of our huge perverse humanity pushed out along its wilful way by an age-long momentum of depravity, turns slowly. Nevertheless it is in the direction of its great change; the day will come, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; and we, like the elders, lift up our eyes and greet the prospect from afar.

Not only so, but as servants of the living God we set ourselves to make it a reality in our little world of every day. We are to look for the best there is in ourselves and in other people, and coax it out for the good impression it will make. On the 26th of February, 1880, Mr. Hannay announced to the Royal Society that he had brought out a diamond in his laboratory. That was considered a great achievement; but it was not so great as one that is within our easy

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reach, namely, to so direct and mix our influence as to win from its hiding place some flash of unsuspected goodness, and shape to permanent beauty some wayward life of man.

It is possible for every disciple of the Lord Christ to put upon this world some touch of transfiguring grace after a fashion of his own. This, mingling with multitudinous others, will give the new tone and color to earthly affairs; it will abide and come out in the great day like the lines of a sun picture on the plate.

> In that day shall the wilderness be as Eden,
> And the desert like the garden of the Lord.
> Therein shall be gladness
> And the voice of melody,
> For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

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Beauty and Sublimity

Luke, ii-xxiv.

1900.

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Beauty and Sublimity

ON a spring day long ago and far from here a child was sitting on the hillside looking off.

At a distance the snow crown of a solitary mountain rested against the blue sky; between the purple hills over which the sun sets flashed the bright waters of the sea; near by were green and flowery slopes and flocks of tame creatures contentedly nibbling the grass.

What a beautiful world—he was saying to himself. How good the air feels. O this lovely sunlight full of singing birds. There goes an eagle, up into the sky. What is the sky—I wonder? How pure and blue it is. How still. I wonder how far up it goes, and what there is beyond? God is there, I am sure, up there in the heavens.

Last evening on the house roof when the stars were so bright, I heard my mother say—thy mercy is great above the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the skies. How wonderful God must be. And he is good, too. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. So my mother says, and she knows.

Yes, God is good. This beautiful world is his, and he made it. How the sea sparkles in the sunlight. He

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gives these pretty birds their wings. They do not have to spin as my mother does, but God takes care of them. O lovely lily, how sweet you are. I do not think Solomon ever had a coat like yours. And God made it.

How beautiful God must be. And he is good. The Lord is good to all. I love him, for he is good. Why doesn't everybody love God?

He is our Father, too. So my mother says. What is that verse she taught me to say? Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. Yes, thou art my Father, O Lord, and I am God's child, the son of God. How beautiful that is. I will go down and talk with my mother about it.

Now this child had a good mother. She was devout, discreet, modest; blessed among women. Some things she could have told her boy, surprising things that happened at the time of his birth. But it may be doubted if she did. She had a way of keeping all such things to herself, pondering them quietly in her heart. The Holy Spirit that overshadowed her once in a great mystery, also taught her to keep those things in her heart, not to spread them with her tongue. The Holy One born of her was truly the Son of God as none other ever was; but so far as we may conjecture, he was to discover this, not by stories of a star in the East and carols of angels in the sky—but in the selfsame way that other children learn from the lips of their parents that God is a Father to them.

So as he goes and sits again by his mother's side, asking deep questions, she would keep those marvellous things in her heart, and talk to him of common things in a way to make them bright with heavenly meaning.

Yes, my son, she would say, we are God's children

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in truth, as I have always told you, when we love him and do as he wants us to. The blue sky that you have been looking up into is his; so is that great and wide sea. He made the mountains and the cedar trees where the stork builds her nest, and the rocks that make hiding places for the conies. These gay lilies in your hand, he clothed them, and he sent the sparrows that twitter on the roof. But you, my child, are of more value than many sparrows because you have a soul; you can know God and love him and call him your Father, and be the son of God indeed.

Perhaps a sword of pain did pierce thro her own soul also, as she feared what this might mean for him in such a world as this when its full meaning would break upon him. But her duty now was to be a devout and faithful mother, instructing this opening mind out of the scriptures. And his duty now was to be an obedient child in the home, and all should see the beauty of the home-life he was helping to make.

By way of obedience he was learning every day more about the Father, and when, some years later, his mother found him one day sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking questions, all were astonished at his understanding. Already, at twelve years of age, he had found out what he was to live for—he must be about his Father's business. That would mean then that he should be in the temple a good deal, talking religion and theology and be done with tools and common things—would it?

No, not that; at least not yet. If he is a true child of God he will go back and be a good child still in the home. He will be subject a while longer to his mother. So he keeps right on helping her as aforetime. He

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takes up his tools and works in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. He can draft a true pattern and fit the joints of his work snugly. He fills out an honest day's work. In all things made like unto his brethren he does the same kind of jobs that James and Joses do; but in the doing of them he is continually saying in his heart—O Father, truly I am thy son; I will finish well the work thou givest me to do; lo, I delight to do thy will, O God my Father. And thus it came to pass that all people could see the beauty of faithfulness in a workingman's life.

So he lives in the hill country village, quietly working, and increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. This appears to have been always a natural growth of intelligence and development, with nothing to attract special attention. For neither then nor long afterward did his brethren reckon him different from themselves; except as they saw in him a deeper thoughtfulness, a more serious turn of mind than they had, also a great fondness for the holy scriptures. They would speak of him, maybe, as being the pious one of the family, often sitting among the sparrows on the house-roof with the roll of the prophet Esaias or the Book of the Psalms in his hand.

All thro those venerable scriptures which he loved, there rose in dim and varied form, shadows of One that was to come, with blessing for mankind. In his brooding thought these far-off outlines of one like the Son of God have a growing and beautiful fascination. Their picturesque imagery floats in upon his dreams, the beauty of the life they point to charms his spirit.

Perhaps he is saying to himself—Why may not the

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fulness of time be already come? Is not the world ripe for the appearing of the Lord's anointed? How I would like to be that holy one. What hinders that I live in holiness all the days of my life and do good among men, as if I were he? It is written that he shall bring good tidings to the meek and help to the poor and needy—and bind up the broken hearted and give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning. How beautiful this is! verily I would like to be doing such things alway. Yea, I will do them, as tho I were the Lord's anointed indeed.

What higher, holier aim of life could anyone have than this—reverently held, trustfully followed, as the Spirit of God should lead? What surer witness of spiritual supremacy could there be than the solemn purpose to fulfil all that was written in Moses and the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning him who should bring salvation to men? Greater than signs in the sky over birth, or mighty works of miracle, would be the deep self-devotion of a soul to work God's redeeming purpose, to be his anointed Son among men. If, among a chosen and peculiar people, trained in the lofty examples of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Daniel, inspired by the poetry of psalmists and prophets, there should arise a youth who, with all intelligence and seriousness, resolves to live led of the Spirit as if he were the Lord's anointed, then, as Dr. Matheson has said, the most dramatic resolve on the stage of time has occurred. Here is the beauty of a holy ambition—before it comes to the finish it will surely mount up to sublimity.

For this life must be in unbroken communion with God, holy and without spot; must fulfil all

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righteousness to the last jot; must prove its divinity, not by mere signs and wonders, but by doing all the will of the Father, till, with the going of the last breath, may be heard the victorious words—it is finished.

In the volume of the book it was written of him —lo, I come. I delight to do thy will, O God. That is more than consent, it is the ardor of sinking man's will in God's, saying, thy will not mine be done. This means a plan and experience of life known only to the Father, revealed only in the light of each day's unfolding. Of that day or any day knoweth not the Son, but the Father only. As the Spirit leads, any day, anywhere, so will he follow, delighting to do God's will. Herein is the beauty of filial devotion and trust.

One day he is led of the Spirit to the waters of Jordan. Many are there receiving the baptism of repentance. For this he is no fit candidate, he has no sin to repent of. But as a brother man he will suffer it to be so now as if he were numbered with transgressors. He will be as his brethren. And no sooner has he who knew no sin identified himself in this way with sinful men and for their sakes, than a voice from heaven certifies that he is the beloved Son indeed.

Still he follows no path of his own, but the way of the Spirit who unfolds the will of the Father. That takes him out into the desert away from the men whom he is eager to work for—what can this mean? Presently he is hungry. What an opportunity this offers to show the power of the Son of God by turning these stones into loaves of bread, transforming the dreary waste into fruitfulness for himself and for

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hungry multitudes! What an act of blessing to the world on the side of its urgent, every-day need!

But perhaps there is another side to be considered first. The question may be—is this what the Father wishes me to do? He will give bread to the hungry, but chiefly by requiring them to work for it. And besides there's something that man needs more than the loaf. He needs the love, the favor, the truth of God; not to live by bread alone, but by every word and promise of God. I will furnish that first, and feed the multitude afterwards—this will be the will of the Father.

Another day it is on a high place dedicated to religion. What an impressive thing it would be to throw myself down, falling confidently into the safe-guarding arms of the Father! What a testimony for God, in the presence of unbelieving people! Or would it rather be a display of rash will and presumption? Is that to please the Father? Nay, it is only self-will.

Another day it is the splendor of leadership. What fascination in that. How beautiful to lead and rule the people to my one will; to govern them righteously; how much better for them to be under me than under ungodly Cæsar. And that will declare that I am the Son of God. Or, will it—not? Does he wish a kingdom built after that manner? Is it not the meek that he will have inherit the earth? Whosoever will be great, must he not be servant of all? Lo, I am among men as he that serveth. Hereafter I will not talk much about being the Son of God; it is better that I be known as the Son of man. The Son of man cometh to seek

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and save that which is lost, not to make a name for himself.

One day some men come up and say, Art thou he that was for to come, or look we for another? Go, tell John what things ye see and hear. The blind see, the deaf hear, lepers are cleansed, the poor have the gospel. When John heard all that, he saw that here was one who did not come to make a name for himself, but only to bring the love of God to men. He made himself of no reputation; he took on him the form of a servant; he humbled himself and became obedient unto all that his fellow men have to experience.

Foxes had holes to nest in, but the Son of man not where to lay his head. He sat weary and thirsty at the well-side. He kept coming down the hill. Everybody else was pushing higher up. He was coming lower down, closer to suffering, struggling, sinful men. He ate with publicans and sinners, and talked with Samaritans. He took most care for the weakest, the poorest. It was the one worst off of all that he healed under the five porches. When they wanted him to hurry up to the ruler's house lest the sick girl die before he get there, he does not hurry at all toward the great man; he stops and talks with a timid woman who didn't dare show herself.

A voice was saying, Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Throughout all their cities and villages he was bringing a gospel, and healing all manner of disease among people, and it proved to be for him only a descent yet lower down into the experience of suffering and sinful and unthankful humanity. Now is seen the sublimity of compassion.

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Some said, he hath a devil and worketh by Beelzebub, prince of the devils. Others, who indeed knew him well, said, he is only the carpenter; everybody knows that he is only the Nazareth carpenter. They began to hate him and sought to destroy him.

Did he lose heart in sorrow and in disappointment? Did he wonder if perhaps he had assumed too much in making himself the Son of God? Did he need to ask, whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? Not for information, not for confirmation. Perhaps he would evoke a confession—thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. It would do them good to say it, but he did not need it for himself. For their sakes he could go up just once into a high mountain and be transfigured. But his daily path continues downward; down beside the foaming lunatic; down to meet spite and jealous hate everywhere; down toward the deep horror of what he surely foresees must overwhelm him.

For indeed this world wants no such Son of God as he. It wants a king, an army, a throne. It wants the splendors of royalty, the pomp of coronation. It wants mammon. His path lies the other way—down; how is he straightened till he accomplish it! The Son of man goeth, as it is written, to suffer; to tread the wine press alone. Down each day a little deeper into the experience of conspiracies and malice and treachery. What sublimity of self-surrender.

How far down from the bright hill-top where he sat, a child among the lilies! What a different world! Can it be that this is God's world? O the dreadfulness of the sin of it! Now is my soul troubled; what shall I say? Father save me from this hour? But for this cause came I to this hour. When I said, lo I come, it

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was to do thy will, O God; to finish the work thou shouldst give me to do. Father glorify thy name by giving strength to thy Son to finish this work.

Down deeper yet into such mystery of woe that his sweat is, as it were, great drops of blood. Father, if thou be willing remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will but thine be done. What sublimity of submission!

Up there on the hill slope of Nazareth the lilies toil not, neither do they spin, and under the eaves of the house where he sat with his mother, the sparrows are nested and their heavenly Father careth for them. Does he care for his beloved Son down here by the olive press now at midnight and a band of men with lanterns and torches creeping along to sieze him? Here are depths of woe deeper down than anybody else ever sounded or can ever know.

The one pure soul among men, who should have been cherished as the priceless gift of God—betrayed with a kiss, hurried thro mock trials, denied by the foremost disciple, scorned and scouted by the ministers of Jehovah's temple, made a plaything of the Roman soldiery, driven out the city gate, hung up between two thieves! No wonder the sky grows black, and a cry goes up as if, for one awful moment, God had forsaken him. So dreadful was it to bear the sins of the world. So great the sublimity of suffering that day.

And yet above all this woe, out of the anguish of defeat and dissolution, rises the triumphant note which never once wavered anywhere on the toilsome way from the flower fields of Nazareth to this ghastly place of a skull. At every step of that path of dedication to

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the Father's will, he could say—I have finished, thus far, the work thou hast given me to do. Now in the act of bowing his head to give up the ghost, he can say with firm voice—It is finished. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. O, the beauty, the sublimity of that triumphant finish. Dead on the cross! Wrapped in linen and spice, lying on the cold stone of the sepulchre.

O ye heavens, bending blue and beautiful over our mortal years—is this the end of a life consecrated to God and to goodness? Lo, it is but the beginning. Whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted. His name shall endure forever, all peoples shall call him blessed.

For the sake of sinful men he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name—Saviour. Going down with calm, firm step to the lowest depths of shame and pain for love's sake, he went on the way to the highest that heaven and earth can render of admiration and honor and love. Where is thy victory, O grave? He is not here, he is risen! He is at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high. Having tasted death for every man and suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God thro him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Many generations have passed and new things have come into the world. But on the hill-slopes of Galilee the young lilies array themselves in beauty still, and sparrows flit about the house-tops of

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Nazareth just as when the mother and her son sat there talking about the Father who is good to all. From lands far away visitors come to see the place. What is it that attracts them? Not flowery fields and birds, and people of today. But a pure life that unfolded here in modest simplicity and obedience—a life wholly dedicated to God, given to the last drop in love to men.

Beauty and sublimity incarnated—a life without spot, a pure offering laid on the altar of love, both when he went about doing good and when he poured out his soul unto death, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.

Lilies are as bright as ever they were on the slopes of Galilee. The beauty of the landscape, the sublimity of snow-crowned Hermon is all there. But the beauty that broods like a heavenly spell upon the land is not from these. It comes from a life lived among those scenes in love and pain for our sakes.

Light from that life lies on every path of duty that fronts us, illumines every experience of distress or need—and whether it be a child, a woman, a man, anywhere on this round globe, whose life is given like his to God's will, there it will be seen that filial obedience is still beautiful, and love that suffers for other's sakes is sublime.

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A Cyclorama

Opening Seals. White Horse and Conqueror. Pale Horse. Death and Hades. Kings. Wrath of the Lamb. Four Angels. Sealing the Faithful. Kindreds and Peoples. Seven Trumpets. Prayers of the Saints. Hail. Fire. Blood. Star Wormwood. Smoke of the Pit. Locusts. Apollyon. Angel and Book. Seven Thunders. Two Witnesses. Earthquake. Second Woe. Angry Nations. Red Dragon. Michael and Angels. War. Seven-headed Beast. Patience of the Saints. The Mark. Lamb on Mt. Sion. Harpers. New Song. Wine of Wrath. Blessed Dead. White Cloud. Reaper and Sharp Sickle. Winepress. Sea of Glass. Vials of Wrath. Scorching and Blasphemy. Armageddon. Unclean Spirits. Scarlet Beast. War with the Lamb. Babylon Fallen. Allelulia. King of Kings. Armies of Heaven. Angel in the Sun. Gog and Magog. Old Serpent. Bottomless Pit. Camp of the Saints. Lake of Fire. Great White Throne.

1887 Revelation, vii—xx.

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A Cyclorama

TITLE, synopsis and material this time are sensational. Note the fact that sensationalism of a high and serious type and for accentuating truth, has an accredited place in the teachings of religion. Sin, by its hideous outrages has shocked the moral sense; redemption was consummated with a shaking earth and a spectacle of suffering innocence hung up in the air from which the sunlight fled away.

The series of Bible records includes such items as a flood, plagues of Egypt, blazing Sinai, wonder-workings of Elijah. And it rounds up with the most spectacular scenery ever spread before the eye of man's imagination.

This is commonly called the Apocalypse or Revelation. I am looking at it now as we in modern times would look on a cyclorama which rounds the whole circle of events into a single piece with one grand consummation. Those mighty cartoons drawn by the hand of John unfold their graphic imagery before us on purpose to catch attention and make a vivid and culminating impression.

What then do they mean? As to specific events, no matter, main trend and aspects only are what we want

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now. The interpretation thereof in detail will keep its deep secrets till a hand that holds the key to all mysteries shall take the scroll and open the seals thereof.

But the trend and outstanding features are plain to see. On this cyclorama is surely pictured to us something of the course of things in this world. Not pivotal crises and far away events only, but the ever-present mingling of forces that make history and give it significance. These are moral facts, the same in all ages everywhere, as real and energetic in our common life today as ever they were or will be.

The first principal fact to note is—antagonism, fight, continuous and desperate. The cyclorama of Gettysburg is tame by the side of this. What scenery of belligerent intent and encounter! See on the first panel, this figure of an armed and mounted officer going forth to conquer; then a pale horse bestridden by death. Across the field yonder a rout of kings and captains scurrying off to dens in the rocks. Swarming up in thick smoke—indescribable shapes led by one Apollyon, a destroyer. Two hundred thousand cavalry with jacinth armor and flaming brimstone. Then tumultuous battle and angry nations and panic and—what bulletin is that, suddenly out?

WAR IN HEAVEN:
MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS
CONTENDING WITH
THE DRAGON AND HIS ANGELS:

To that far height this war-cloud discharges. All along, from the prancing into view of the white, red, black and pale horses to the great field of Armageddon and the hordes of Gog and Magog besieging the camp

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of the saints, you see the fight breaking out, mostly on a grand scale—intelligent, close, desperate, deadly, long.

Now what is it all about? A grapple and tussle for power? I do not see it so. Religion does not concern itself with power except as related to ideas. Its commanding word is not power but righteousness. Jesus did not choose kingdoms, but the will of God. This fight is for ideas—right against wrong. Between these two opposed principles there must be perpetual antagonism.

That is what our cyclorama signifies for one thing. And the fight is nowhere nearly done yet. It is on as hard perhaps now as ever it was. We are thankful for these times of peace, but there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked—no peace where unrighteousness is tolerated. There's fight whichever way we turn, inside of men and outside. The war-drum may not throb but the pulse of passion does. Cannon are quiet, but good and bad are in close clinch on a thousand fields.

It has always been so. Enmity was announced in Eden, at the cool of the day. Moses and the prophets had their hands full fighting the bad ways of their times. I came not to bring peace, said the Saviour, but a sword. Into the field dashed the valorous knight who was before a blasphemer and persecutor, and his autobiography reads, I have fought a good fight. On the Lord's day, in a peaceful island of the sea, the long story of the world was outlined in this panorama of battle.

But we looked for something very different. Didn't the choir sing from the night skies a song of peace on earth? Pray where is the Prince of Peace?

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Just where he said he should be—setting men at variance. It could not be otherwise. The world was against him because his ideas opposed its popular ways. Whoever follows him will be at variance with every bad thing among men. That sets up fight, as it always has. Wickedness does not want to be rebuked, even by the silent presence of goodness. Aristides must be banished. As for Jesus, crucify him! Goodness, if there is any in the way, must be expelled. Put the church out! If it won't go, then centuries of fight are before it and rivers of blood.

None too belligerent are these cyclorama scenes of war against the saints and souls beheaded for the testimony they held. Yea, have we not heard of such things even nearer home? Nineteenth century weapons of slavery or of rum against the testimony of righteousness—what are they? Mobs, imprisonments, outrages, incendiary fire, scourgings and slaughter. In every land the sun lights up today the old fight is still on over some new phase of the same old issues, and with every prospect of continuing for a long while yet.

But we needn't go so far afield. The contested territory is not continents but hearts. Look at the one you know best. Is it a realm of smiling and perpetual peace? Have you never discovered a law in your members warring against the law of your better mind? Did you never have a stand up fight with yourself, or, like a famous old fighter, have to say—the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not that I do. It may have been only a disinclination to take hold of what ought to be done, postponing the immediate duty; or it may have been a lurking ill-propensity we wanted to be rid of, a bad

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habit we proposed to toss off at our pleasure, till one day, marching stoutly up to it, we found ourselves returning in the way of Bull Run.

Look at our cyclorama again and note for a second thing, how vividly contrasted the two sides are in aspect and bearing. In real life it is not always so. Except for the uniform you couldn't tell, maybe, which of two armies a man belonged to. Champions of righteousness do not include all the best looking men. There are plenty of sleek, well-favored scoundrels. The success of iniquity depends in part on the fair show it can make; those who fight for it get themselves up as respectable citizens and give out plenty of plausible reasons why all who are not religious cranks should train with them, or at least give them a fair chance.

But on this pictured screen how is it? Are we ever in doubt as to where any actor ranks? Is there any mixing of quality or balancing of worth between the sides? Never a bit. No shading off can be detected. The sides are as unlike as white and black, and what the character of any actor is can never be mistaken.

On one side the figures are noble. The commander, who is a man, is magnificent. His regiments are uniformed in clean white linen. At intervals they appear with palms or musical instruments. They stand at the front without fault or guile, the name of God is in their foreheads.

On the same side are other actors, not men, radiant in aspect and equipment. They wear sashes of gold. They swing golden censers. One is crowned with a rainbow. One stands in the sun. One carries the seal of the living God. Four stand holding back deadly winds from blowing hurt on righteous men.

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Look now at the opposite side. The type is very different. Death on the pale horse; swarming nondescripts, man-headed, long-haired, shaped like locusts, with stinging tails of scorpions; a great red dragon, pushing out ten horns and trailing a third part of the stars at his tail. And a seven-headed leopard starting up from the sea brine, and a two-headed beast going straight to do the red dragon's business—a business of blaspheming, juggling, lying, deceiving and slaughtering. Even the women forms are sharply contrasted. On one side the fair woman, star-crowned, standing in the crescent moon; on the other side the vile woman, mother of abominations, riding her scarlet-colored beast, decked with finery and drunk with cruelty and filthiness.

These contrasted picturings do not need a skilled interpreter. They tell their own story. Good and bad are set unmistakably apart from each other. Between the two is a great gulf of difference. We always knew that sin was a disturber of the peace; not always did we know the inner ugliness of sin nor the surpassing beauty of holiness; therefore in this picture gallery the two are set off in startling juxtaposition. If men are not loyally righteous they are inwardly false. He that is not with the king is against him.

It cannot well be otherwise—one is either obedient to his maker or disobedient. If disobedient, which side is he on? We are apt to say that if he is very bad, he's on the bad side. How bad must he be to be very bad? Suppose he's in a complacent mood and says, I'll take care not to be very bad. I'll be as near good as I can conveniently. In this transaction I'll cheat only ten cents, where I might as easily as not make a half a

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dollar. It is comforting to human nature to contemplate the sacrifice of forty cents for conscience's sake. But where does this man rank? is he loyal or false? is he honorable or a cheat? is he a big cheat or a little one? That depends on his avoirdupois.

I will point you to a picture hung high in the East long ago. A garden scene ideally beautiful—a shapely hand taking fruit from the bough. What sylvan loveliness! What Arcadian simplicity! Do you see it so? You see it not so, but as the front vignette of every tragedy that has crushed the families of men. So far from being idyllic it is unspeakably calamitous. From this time on, what hideous doings, what outraging of innocence, what uprising of horned beasts in human shape, what brutality stalking up and down "red in tooth and claw with ravin."

The outward devastations anybody can see, but it needs a spiritual artist to paint in true colors the landscape of the heart. Then it is seen that any tempter to evil is a venomous snake, and that any least disobedience lets loose the whole pack of beastly passions. A sign-board is up and it reads, he that committeth sin is of the devil. On that clear landscape the hireling shepherd is a wolf, and whoso hateth his brother is branded a murderer. Those natural brute beasts prowling around the edge of the field are despisers of government, and that washed sow going down to wallow in the mire is one who has dismissed the Christian life from his heart.

The artist commonly paints that which he sees on the surface of things, searching always for beauty. The old masters of Bible times made a study of the inner shapes and colorings of the heart of man.

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Whatever they laid upon the canvas can be depended on as vigorously truthful, for their work was done under the solemnity of a divine commission, and it stands for our instruction in righteousness.

A third characteristic of this cyclorama is the wide reach of it and the introduction of what we might call foreign allies. The field of action is chiefly this planet, but the operators are not all of them natives. Reinforcements are continually coming down, or up, as the case may be, from outside territory. Or a sort of parallel encounter is depicted along the firmament, now among the stars, or again at the crater of some underlying pit.

Something similar we used to read in the old epics, and trained our eye to see above the heads of Hector and Achilles such spectres as helmeted Minerva, Mars brandishing the mighty spear, Bellona driving celestial war chariots. But then we knew perfectly well that all this was elegant Greek fiction. Is it also all fictitious in the spiritual scriptural epic? Quite surely not. From beginning to end it is insisted that man's affairs are not clear of outside interference.

The very front cartoon, in its few forceful strokes, shows there is a Sovereign of the skies; also that he is man's ally in the garden against a subtle spirit that suddenly slips in from somewhere. From that time on, upper or lower powers are pictured as entering the field with comfort, cheer and help, or with damage. If Jacob is on the way to better life, lo, shining figures descending the mighty stairway, and a voice speaking kindly to him. If David has a mind to do wilfully there's some sort of a satan to set him on. Ahab's prophets get reinforcement by lying spirits; Elijah

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gets celestial transportation. If Job is mauled and peeled by invisible operators, Daniel is thrilled by the touch of one not a native nor a citizen of this planet. This is the earlier picturing.

And on the graphic diorama that winds up the story, it is drawn with still firmer hand—heaven, earth and hell mingling operations in the same sign of the great zodiac. We have read of wrestlings with principalities and powers of darkness, but neither this nor the chivalry of the skies took shape in our thought, till these pictured forms stood out on the screen—huge, uncouth, devilish, spitting fire and malignant foam—or from the opposite quarter, spirits in brilliant aspect, swift, noble, strong, coming to reinforce a righteous cause.

It stirred our souls to know that monarchs and foreign courts were eager spectators of our civil war, and might become participants, for the principles at stake were not bounded by this continent. Nor are they, nor any of the moral issues of man's life, bounded by the globe we are on. They run straight out thro all worlds. Purity, temperance, loyalty, truth, love, are in some fashion on the banners of Michael and Zephon; pride, subtlety, malice, fraud, figure as slyly or insolently somewhere else as here. This fact puts larger meaning on the great moral conflicts of history, and gives to every solitary act and effort of righteousness a sort of supernatural grandeur.

Some people to be sure, wish to make away with the supernatural. The Saducees say that there is neither angel nor spirit. They allow that spirits good or bad are imaginary, that miracles are myths, that Jesus was a superlatively good man. But what gain is

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this to anybody? Is the world better off to be rid of all agencies called supernatural or extra-human?

I, for one, do not like to think that all the damnable iniquities of this earth were aboriginally spawned out of the heart of man. It is some slight relief to think that he may have been beguiled by some subtle influence into bad ways, a victim rather than prime originator and manager of evil.

Then too it would be a sorry day for man, if, in the depths of his disaster and guilt, he must abandon the hope of superhuman help. Sinful humanity will have no use for a Christ who must take back the announcement that he came from heaven to save the lost—who can no longer tell us that he will come again and all his holy angels with him to judge the world. Verily this is what we will confidently look for in the final and just rounding up of things.

> "We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge,
> We therefore pray thee, keep thy servants
> Whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood."

Fourth—One other thing that stands clear on our sacred cyclorama is a well defined issue. Your eye sweeps over the tumultuous action, shifting scenery, thickening plot, and for a while it seems indecisive. At first the bad is rampant, aggressive, irresistible. It riots over earth with savagery of wild beasts; hunger, pain and death are in its trail, till souls of the righteous cry out from under the altar of their sufferings. What! Is this merely pictorial? Or, have we somewhere read how the best souls of earth have been set upon as if they were vermin—driven into catacombs, fed out alive to hungry lions, burned to death for holiday spectacles, slaughtered on Alpine

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mountains cold, hacked to pieces, tormented with all sorts of blood-curdling implements, till—what wonder a "thin and thrilling cry from under the altar, how long, O Lord, holy and true!" Is there a just God, and does he care for his suffering children?

Come forward now to another panel. What are these in white robes and whence came they? Why these are those same sufferers farther on. They are not defeated, nor extinguished. They have come out from their great tribulation. There they are, walking in white amongst the water fountains—there again with heraldry of palm and crown—there again with songs and alleluias—there again on the sea of glass mingled with fire, for thro fire they came—there again on dress parade with their mounted Leader, for this is the scarred and battered tenth legion of the armies of heaven.

The world reported them whipped and put out. So it seemed, and the revelry of the world went on. But none were ever defeated who obeyed God rather than men. So it is painted on the great cyclorama. There they are, on the heights, victors, the van-line of all loyal souls of all time. I salute them with admiring gratitude.

"I ask them whence their victory came;
They with united breath
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to his death."

How to be winners in life's battle is a practical question. It fronts us every day. Is there any well-defined expectation for each one man and for the cause of truth that he loves? Look at the picturings again and see. At the front is a Leader, resourceful

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invincible. In varying and impressive form he repeatedly appears on the scene inspiring admiration and courage.

See him flashing into view with a countenance bright as the sun, at his girdle the keys of death and the under-world, for this is he who was dead and is alive forevermore. See him taking the armorial bearing of the lion of Judah—again under the emerald bow the aspect of a lamb wounded to death—again astride the white horse a conqueror—again leading his fellows among peaceful fields and fountains. There again high up, riding a swift white cloud, with golden sickle, to superintend the vintage of the winepress of God's wrath. Now

> "He is trampling out the vintage where
> the grapes of wrath are stored,"

and what do you see? Sixteen hundred furlongs of running blood from the winepress even to the horse bridles, and seven vials of wrath emptied on the persecutors of God's saints. Then what putrid sores break out upon them, what blood to drink, what scorching of blasphemers who gnaw their tongues in more blaspheming, what vomiting of unclean frogs from the dragon's throat, what mustering for fight at Armageddon, what downfall of arrogant Babylon and hurling of the beast into the lake of fire. Then on the plains of heaven the grand review, led by the commander crowned with many crowns, his vesture dipped in blood and lettered—King of kings, Lord of lords.

Now it doesn't matter that we identify these hieroglyphics with any one group of events. They

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may apply to a hundred for aught you or I know. Already many a time and after many a fashion has this illustrious Leader who on earth single-handed put temptation, sin and death under foot, executed the righteous judgments of the Almighty, smitten the nations with the rod of his providence, overturned great wrongs and brought peace to his people. If you doubt whether he ordered the march from Atlanta to the sea, you may be sure that he leads in person the march from Calvary to the sea—the sea of glass mingled with fire.

It is millennium long and planet wide; you may trace the track of it by wrecks left along the way—fallen Babylons, dead cities and empires, fragments of old idolatries and rancorous bigotries, rusty implements of torture, martyrs' fagots, slave chains. All these had their proud day and were reckoned irresistible. It look long and desperate fighting to bring them low; but goodness won at last and left them dead on the field, as we might say. No, not just that, after all, for the spirit of godlessness survives the wreck of one form and reappears in new shapes to curse each new age.

Here it is again before our eyes flaunting its insolence in combinations whose shapes and colorings were laid on the cyclorama long ago. That ten-horned dragon, the saloon, ravages the land with effrontery and pitiless ruin; the scarlet-colored mother of abomination and filthiness nests the broods of social vice; the gambling beast like an octopus reaches out one sly tentacle after another to suck in the unwary; the innocent-faced lamb-horned beast, a wolf in sheep's

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clothing, haunts a new-fangled Zion wherein polygamy is a standard ordinance of religion.

Monstrosities like these are an affront to our civilization, a stench in our atmosphere. Earnest souled men and women are fighting hard to rid the land of their cursed presence and blight, to make them like Oreb and Zeeb, yea as Zebah and as Zalmunna. Others look on and say it never can be done. Not so the cyclorama, whose prophetic signals we are anxiously scanning. It has for all such, one bottomless pit, and the testimony of history is that its picturings do not fail, that righteousness wins on any field where Christ leads, tho ages are piled up in the process.

The fight is on every day; we ourselves are in it with our appointed charge—real, however inconspicuous. If we could see the conflict in its true significance and coloring, it would be not a whit less graphic than those startling pictures display it.

Look again. On this side—justice and honor, faith in God and reverence for his holy will, sincerity, an illumined and sensitive conscience, sobriety and purity, dutifulness, generosity, self-sacrifice, magnanimity, love.

Look again. On that side—infidelity, bitterness, jealousies, spite, unhallowed and fiery passions, malice, lawlessness, subtlety and fraud, meanness, rapacity, the devouring and demonizing greed for money, self-will, blasphemy, irreligion.

It needs only a little close observation to discover that these contestants are in perpetual grapple, on the wide field of affairs, or in the dim seclusion of a solitary heart, day and night in all the life of man. It looks very much as if this earth was constructed as a field

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for the fight, dedicated to the solemn antagonisms of righteousness and sin. A spectacle altogether sublime when we are certified that right shall surely win, that simple goodness is to prove itself the supreme and victorious force in the story of the world.

At Gettysburg, after four hundred cannon had been roaring for hours across the field, there came a lull. Then a song sparrow flew to a peach-tree on Cemetery hill and gave out a little trill of melody.

> "Which song is the sweetest where both sing well,
> The bird's or the bullet's—ah, who shall tell?"

One might say that above the smoke and carnage was a presiding Presence—in righteousness doth he judge and make war—who so distinctly marked the issues there pending, that he sent his little bird to sing a strain of peace when, for a moment, the cannon stopped their noise.

Today, thro the land there is a lull in the roar of machinery, in the plunge and passion of competition, in the outward violence of irreligion. During the hush of this holy day we catch a strain of song from purer worlds—we sight the imagery that pictures to us the winding up of the long story.

What report does it render? Lo, the dragon beasts and Gog and Magog hordes have all been brushed from the field like noxious insects into burning brimstone. The servants of the living God are with their Leader in white. High in the solemn background is the Great White Throne—

> "Allelulia!
> For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

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ERRATA

Page 188, second line. For vigorously read rigorously.
Page 190, second line of stanza. For keep read help.

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